HOME LANDSCAPES: AMATEUR GARDENING & POPULAR HORTICULTURE IN THE MAKING OF PERSONAL, NATIONAL AND IMPERIAL IDENTITIES, 1815-1914.

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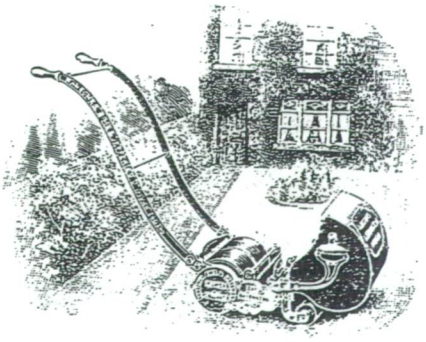

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Abstract

'Home Landscapes: amateur gardening and popular horticulture in the making of personal, national and imperial identities, 1815-1914', is a study of suburban gardening in nineteenth-century London. Contemporary horticultural essayists, with some justification, often championed gardening as an 'art of peacetime', and the British as a nation of gardeners', during a period when thoughts turned naturally to domestic matters. Between the end of the Napoleonic wars and the First World War amateur gardening in many ways did become the British national pastime.

Rapid changes occurred in the design and culture of the fashionable garden and the self-consciously modern science of horticulture quickly embraced new technologies. Amateur gardeners, too, welcomed the newly available forms of horticultural technology, and their gardens benefited from developments in hybridisation, pest control and engineering. The nineteenth-century garden, then, was not built upon dreams of a romanticised past; this vibrant space was physically and ideologically responsive to the winds of change.

The thesis uses the garden as a medium through which to understand evolving ideas about domestic culture on the one hand and to explore wider social and cultural change, on the other. The thesis explores both the material culture of the suburban landscape and examines its reciprocal relationship with ideas and expressions of popular nationalism and imperialism as they were manifest in the domestic garden.
For most of the nineteenth century the suburban garden was largely the province of the middle classes, although it was a model to which other sections of society aspired. Hence my subjects belonged essentially to those middle classes who, increasingly, were migrating to the suburb in search of an ideal domestic environment.

Acknowledgements.

Many people have helped in the research and writing of this thesis, both before and since I registered for the PhD at Royal Holloway late in 1995. First of all I am grateful to the British Academy Humanities Research Board Scholarship which enabled me to undertake this project. Even before this, however, staff, students and others associated with the V&A/RCA History of Design Course, whence I gained my MA in 1994, encouraged me to pursue my interest in garden history, wrote references and have since done me the honour of twice asking me back to discuss my research. Conversations with Jeremy Aynsley, Tim Barringer, Chris Breward, Gillian Naylor, Penny Sparke, John Styles and Charles Saumarez Smith were thus all germane to the writing of this thesis. I am also indebted to the late Clive Wainwright who more than anyone managed to instil in me a passion for Victorian garden culture (including a reluctant fondness for William Robinson), a subject about which he was deeply knowledgeable. Clive gave generously of both this knowledge and his time and resources.

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1. From Grove Hill to Grove Park Road: the Evolution of a London Suburb, 1815-1914.

> Every part of the world has its peculiar productions; and in no objects of natural history, is the variety more entertaining, and important than horticulture. The gardens of the curious have already been enriched with many valuable acquisitions from distant countries. (J. C. Lettsom, *The Naturalist's & Traveller's Companion*, 1799, p. 23)

> He who improves the soil, and augments its products by increased vegetation, who discovers new articles of diet, or a better method of cultivating vegetables already known, is a benefactor to the community. (J. C. Lettsom, *Grove Hill*, 1804, p. 5)

On November 7th 1815, Dr. John Coakley Lettsom was interred at the Friends' burial ground, Bunhill Fields, just north of the City of London. This avid patriot had survived long enough to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon, but died shortly before the signing of the Treaty of Alliance in Paris on November 20th 1815. The new century brought misfortune after misfortune, including the death of a son. The financial crash of 1810, meanwhile, necessitated the sale of his magnificent library, and his collections of coins and scientific paraphernalia. These losses, combined with reckless generosity, ultimately ruined him. His greatest loss, however, was of his pride and joy - Grove Hill, the villa he built for himself, his wife and eight children, and where he had spent nearly every weekend since 1779 (figs. 1.1-1.3). The villa was bought by a solicitor in 1814, who developed a row of exclusive, but much smaller, villas on the site and named them Grove Crescent.[1] If the loss of Grove Hill marked the end of one era, Grove Crescent's emergence heralded the birth of new one, decked out in white stucco and bound with ribbons of leafy roads.

John Coakley Lettsom was born into a slave-owning family on Tortola in the West Indies, where his parents, Mary Coakley and Edward Lettsom owned a plantation. Half of the last and only surviving pair of twins from seven sets born of his mother, John was sent to the Friends' school at Penketh, Lancashire, under the direction of Dr. John Fothergill, a prominent Quaker physician and curator of a private Botanic Garden at Upton Park, East

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[1]See James Johnston Abraham, *Lettsom: His Life, Times, Friends and Descendants* (3 vols.), (William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd., 1933); Sir St. Clair Thomson, *John Coakley Lettsom*, (Harrison and Sons, 1918).

Ham.[2] On completing his medical degree in Leyden, Lettsom returned to Tortola to free his slaves before settling in England for good.[3] There he selected the site for his own domestic plantation in the healthy suburb of Camberwell, three miles south-east of London Bridge, on the Surrey side of the river. Grove Hill was erected in 1779, when Camberwell was little more than a village and only just beginning to attract wealthy migrants from the City. After 1750, South London had begun to swell as better access from across the river was afforded by the opening of Westminster and Blackfriars Bridges, and the new toll-roads radiating outwards from St. George's Circus.[4] As late as 1800, Lettsom's book about Camberwell, *Village Society* could casually define the place as having 'few poor inhabitants and not many overgrown fortunes.'[5] Fourteen years later, fellow Quaker and botanist, Priscilla Wakefield (1751-1832), would write in her *Perambulations in London and its Environs* that Camberwell was 'a pleasant retreat of those citizens who have a taste for the country whilst their avocations daily call them to town'.[6] By 1819, three more bridges - Vauxhall (1816), Waterloo (1817), and Southwark (1819) - spanned the Thames.[7] In 1818, the notorious Cut-Throat Alley was replaced with Camberwell New Road.[8] The New Road was a wide, straight, smart thoroughfare lined with modern three-storey yellow-stock villas with substantial front gardens. It was punctuated at its far end with the impressive 'Waterloo' Church of St. Mark.[9] By about 1800 two firms each ran

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[2]Sir Joseph Banks thought that 'no other garden in Europe royal or of a subject, had nearly so many scarce and valuable plants' as Fothergill's Upton garden near West Ham in Essex. See James Walvin, *The Quakers, Money & Morals*, (John Murray, 1997), pp. 93-93. John Fothergill (1712-1780) is now remembered mainly as the bearded old man on packets of seeds.

[3]Walvin, *The Quakers*, 1997, p. 127.

[4]Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, (1994; Penguin, 1996), p. 224

[5]Quoted in H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1961; 1966), p. 36.

[6]Priscilla Wakefield, *Perambulations in London and its Environs*, 1814, p. 439.

[7]Porter, *London: A Social History*, 1996, p. 224.

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]St. Mark's architect was David Roper who also designed Grove Chapel on Camberwell Grove in 1818. See Mary Boast, *The Story of Camberwell*, (London Borough of Southwark Neighbourhood History No. 1, 1996), p. 42.

coaches seven times a day between Camberwell Green and Gracechurch Street in the City; there was also a Hackney Carriage stand nearby. Thomas Tilling set up a horse-omnibus business in Peckham High Street during 1851. The route, via Camberwell, took south-London passengers to the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park.[10] Twenty years later, Camberwell New Road was a main horse-tram route for both the City and West End (fig. 3.22). By the time of Victoria's accession Camberwell's status as an upmarket suburb was firmly established.

Unlike the subsequent Victorian settlers of his suburban estate, Lettsom did not 'commute' daily to his work, but retired to his villa and family at weekends; during the week Lettsom stayed at his City house near the Guildhall. Modern sensibilities are likely to charge Lettsom with gross understatement in calling Grove Hill his 'villa'. The house was set in five acres of gardens (figs. 1.4-1.5) and commanded views over the river which stretched from Lambeth to the west and beyond Greenwich and the Woolwich Arsenal to the east. According to Lettsom's inventory, these gardens contained some 200 fruit trees, a botanic garden, a large museum, an apiary of 64 hives, walks, lawns, fountains, ponds, groups of statuary made from the locally manufactured Coade stone and an avenue called 'Shakespeare's Walk'.[11] Like many of his peers, especially those in the medical and surgical professions, Lettsom was an accomplished botanist and published several books on the subject. As pleasure-gardens, Grove Hill's grounds were the model of contemporary fashion; Lettsom corresponded with the most fashionable landscape gardener of the day, Humphry Repton.[12] The gardens were also, however, botanically innovative. As a mark of his patriotism, Lettsom planted a mile-long 'arbustum' divided by a path. On either side of this were planted 400 English plants all labelled with Linnaean nomenclature; Lettsom was also a correspondent of Linnaeus. Continuing his fascination with indigenous and hardy plants more generally, Lettsom had the garden below the bowling green divided into two oval compartments. One side was devoted to English herbaceous plants and the

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[10]Boast, *Story of Camberwell*, 1996, p. 30. The present No. 12 bus follows the same route.

[11]St. Clair Thomson, *John Coakley Lettsom*, 1918, p. 11.

[12]Stephen Daniels, *Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1999), p. 267.

other to American shrubs. Although the fashion for American gardening - the cultivation of plants requiring acid soil such as rhododendrons - was at its peak in the twenty years either side of 1800 and continued in dilute form for most of the next century, American gardening had a special resonance for Lettsom. Many of the plants raised in his American garden had belonged to his late friend, John Fothergill who, in turn, had had them transplanted from the Bartram family's garden in the American Quaker colony, Pennsylvania.[13] Dr. Lettsom was, however, not so enamoured with hardy and native plants that he neglected to grow exotics - tender plants from tropical climates that required protection in English atmospheres - perhaps because they reminded him of Tortola. Lettsom acquired Fothergill's collection of greenhouses and many of the tropical plants they contained.[14] The figure of Flora presided, appropriately, over the entrance from the pleasure-gardens to the kitchen gardens and hothouses.[15] The *Gentleman's Magazine* noted that the 'conservatories of native and exotic plants' at Grove Hill linked the gardens with the library: 'the library opens by a glass door into the garden through the green-house; and by another door into the museum or repository of natural history'.[16] Lettsom collected specimens of all sorts, and thought of them in like terms, whether animal, vegetable or mineral. In a distant part of the garden overlooking the neighbouring suburb Peckham, was the Temple of Sybils, a sort of amateur observatory, which also housed 'a great number of South-Sea weapons and curios'. It was here that the doctor entertained his collection of eminent friends with syllabub and Tortola punch.[17]

Although the house and garden were littered with symbols of classical antiquity and civic humanism, Lettsom also built into the Grove Hill gardens more subtle references to his humanitarian and political beliefs. The 64 hives, each distinguished in legible characters by kingdoms and nations, beginning in the north of Europe and continuing

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[13]Abraham, *Lettsom*, 1933, p. 306.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 298.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 307.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 316.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 310.

through Asia, Africa and America,[18] supplied the Lettsom household with enough sweeteners in the form of honey to avoid the purchase of slave-produced sugar. In a more public statement of his convictions, Lettsom's Protestant patriotism overrode his innate pacifism when he invited the Camberwell Volunteers to drill on his lawn at a fete reported in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1804.[19] Amid English fears of French invasion, Lettsom had become Surgeon-in-Chief to the Volunteers, organised by his prominent Huguenot neighbours at Champion House, Sir William Claude and Lady Mary Champion de Crespigny, Commandant and uniform designer to the Volunteers, respectively.[20] Lettsom's religion prevented him from more active military service. The following year, Lettsom would write to the Cambridge theologian and satirical playwright, Revd. J. Plumptre that he was 'glad that so many persons of the middle classes attended [his] sermon, especially the militia, to whom with the Volunteers, we are perhaps indebted for life and liberty.'[21] Thus even ardent botanists imbued their plants and gardens with something more than scientific properties; and in the following chapters we shall see how the spaces contained within a garden also connected with other places, other times, and other lives.

Apart from a few overgrown exotic trees, little remains of the Grove Hill estate, save in name. After the construction of Grove Crescent in 1819 (figs. 1.6-1.7), there followed a sequence of events which would gradually erase the features of what was essentially an eighteenth-century suburb and transform it into the 'Victorian Suburb' of the urban historian H. J. Dyos's eponymous book on Camberwell. It was a sequence repeated in exclusive suburbs in the early nineteenth century all around London, where even the names of the streets and avenues would be similar, including such picturesque titles as Grove Park, Acacia Avenue, or Linden Lea, alongside those honouring military campaigns and royalty. The Camberwell Collegiate School was next established on the site in 1834

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 316.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 318.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

and the villa itself was remodelled about 1840, to incorporate three separate dwellings, one of them a school for the daughters of local dignitaries. There was also space in the developing suburb for entertainment, however, and Grove House, in Camberwell Grove, contained a fashionable ballroom which Dickens described in *Sketches by Boz* (1836).[22] Attached to Grove House, meanwhile, were the Camberwell Tea Gardens, the probable rendezvous for the Wemmicks' post-nuptial breakfast in Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860-61).[23]

In 1866 came the inevitable incursion by the South London Railway. C. Manby Smith commented on the changes made to the suburban landscape by the railway in his *Curiosities of London Life* (1853). He wrote of 'the deep gorge of a railway cutting, which has ploughed its way right through the centre of the market-gardens, and burrowing beneath the carriage road, and knocking a thousand houses out of its path, pursues its circuitous course to the city.'[24] The railway cut through the Grove, into what had been the Lettsoms' private carriage drive, but was by now a development of suburban terraces. The estate was then purchased by a railway magnate, William Chadwick, who developed the present Grove Park for residential purposes. In 1893 numbers 9 and 10 Grove Park were built on the pleasure-garden, which was divided longitudinally between the two houses, and the transformation of Grove Hill to Grove Park was almost complete. The Grove Vale Estate, (figs. 1.8-1.9), built in 1905, continued the development of southern Camberwell into the twentieth century.

During each phase of redevelopment, alteration and addition, Camberwell was reinvented for another wave of suburban settlers. Although these communities changed in terms of class and density, and the visual and social character of the area shifted accordingly, they retained the essential ingredients of the suburban domestic landscape: space, quiet, and greenery. As the century progressed, houses isolated by acres of garden such as Lettsom's were too expensive a luxury except in the new, outer suburbs where

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[22] Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, (eds.), *The London Encyclopaedia*, (Macmillan, 1983), p. 117.

[23] Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1860-61; Wordsworth, 1992), p. 352.

[24] C. Manby Smith, *Curiosities of London Life* (1853), cited in Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, (1963; Penguin, 1968), pp. 114-115.

land values were cheap as well as less populated. Nevertheless, each successive wave of development in the older residential suburbs provided homes with gardens that were, by present standards, more than substantial (fig. 1.7). The social reformer Charles Booth's report of 1897, undertaken for his *Life and Labour of the London Poor*, made this point precisely. Booth's researchers had visited the same area of Camberwell less than a decade previously, and had noted this change. 'This area well illustrates the tendency for what may be called the inner ring of suburban London to be occupied by a less wealthy class than formerly.' Lettsom's upper middle-class, well-to-do, and wealthy successors were being

> driven back to the south of the railway, save for a short strip along Denmark Hill [...] On the other hand, there will still be some left and this is not surprising for the part lying round Champion Hill Terrace is exceedingly pleasant, with much open ground and splendid views to the north over London and south towards Dulwich. Even in this neighbourhood, however, when there is any alteration, the tendency is for smaller houses to take the place of the old large ones, as for instance, in Grove Park Rd. But the "smaller" ones are not small and for many years it is probable that the greater part of this area will be occupied by a well-to-do middle-class, of the type occupying the new houses put up on the Grove Park Estate.[25]

As Booth researcher PC 'Taffy' Jones remarked in his report on the Denmark Hill area in late 1899, 'Many new houses being built in place of the old ones [...] No demand now for suburban palaces.'[26] James Kenward spent his 'suburban childhood' in the Grove Park of the Edwardian period. 'It is magnificent, of course,' he wrote, looking back on this time,

> to have your house "standing in its own grounds", with an orchard on one side, and a paddock on the other, so that your garden need not be thought of as divided into front and back. Nevertheless, the back gardens of Suburbia have their advantages, even their fascination.
>
> So now let me devote a chapter to back gardens in ordinary, hoping that the historian of Suburbia will be stimulated to explore the maze of etiquette concerning them and give them the chapter they deserve in this great work.[27]

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[25]Jess Steel, (ed.), *The Streets of London, the Booth Notebooks: South East*, (Deptford Forum, 1997), p. 185.

[26]Steel, *Booth Notebooks*, p. 201.

[27]James Kenward, *The Suburban Child*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 110-111.

By 1914 even the smallest suburban villa could boast such a back garden; and front gardens, however tiny, would increasingly accompany the new wave of modestly proportioned suburban palaces appearing all around London in the building boom of 1900-1914. (figs. 1.10-1.11).

* * *

This thesis is not the story of a particular garden or a particular suburb, or indeed, of a particular family of gardeners. It is an account of the *process* of horticulture, of suburban development, and of social and cultural attitudes to the garden within a changing social and political climate, over a period of ninety-nine years. It explores the ways in which domestic landscapes have shaped the formation of personal, national, and imperial identities and how these identities have been reflected back upon the design and consumption of the suburban garden. Like all identities, these were complex and thickly layered, being bound up with contemporary fears and beliefs about Nation, Empire and the world at large on the one hand and, on the other, about class formation, gender roles, polite conduct, and family on the other. By looking in the right places it is possible to recover a sense of both the depth of these beliefs and the ways in which they were manifest.

The thesis examines the role of amateur gardening and popular horticulture in the making of suburban, personal, imperial and national identities between 1815 and 1914. Chapter Two examines the reasons why the design, culture and consumption which altogether fashioned the geography of the nineteenth-century domestic garden are largely unexplored by those histories where we might have expected to find it properly discussed. It reviews recent work in disciplines related to geography which, though they focus upon different landscapes, cultures, social groups, and periods share approaches that have informed my own study. Chapter Three details the primary methods and sources employed in revealing the historical geography of this garden which, though few traces remain on the ground, has left behind a trail of clues in the form of printed, mapped, and biographical evidence which bear witness to its wide-ranging contemporary social and cultural significance. This chapter also introduces the dedicated institutions, media and individuals which played key roles in the popularisation of gardening as *the* amateur pastime in

metropolitan suburbs; and suggests that between them they were instrumental in moulding a nation of gardeners from disparate, distanced, and differently situated suburban familes at home in their gardens.

To readdress the balance within architectural, garden, landscape, social and urban histories, then, the remaining five chapters of the thesis consider how the 'ordinary', middling-class, domestic garden was, respectively, first, an essential component of the larger suburban landscape and culture, second, an intimate part of family life, third, a locus for imagining the world beyond the garden, and, fourth, towards the end of our period, a potent force in the creation of 'Englishness'. The eighth chapter concludes the thesis, drawing together the diverse but interconnected themes which altogether coalesced in the amateur, suburban garden, and in its development, consumption and social and symbolic functions throughout the long nineteenth century.

Running throughout the four inter-connected essays is the premise not only that 'a nation of gardeners' was thickly scattered among the villas of 'any typical middle-class suburb, Camberwell or Peckham, Hackney or Holloway',[28] but that these otherwise private, dispersed men, women, and children were linked through a network of reading and writing about, exhibiting, purchasing and collecting for the garden. Although still categorised according to the usual criteria of class, income, employment, education, religion and ethnicity, then, broad swathes of the middling classes were united in their gardening habits - if not their gardening taste. They were also united, however, in their uniquely reviled position as *suburban* gardeners.

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[28]*The Spectator*, 9 February 1895, 'Review' of George Gissing's *In the Year of the Jubilee*, quoted in Jon Paul Henry, 'Gissing and his Critics', introduction to *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894; Wordsworth Classics, 1994), p. 377.

2. Rescuing the Victorian Suburban Domestic Garden

> Napoleon designated us, you well remember, as a "nation of shopkeepers:" had he called us a "nation of gardeners" he had probably characterised us with much greater truth. The avidity with which we cultivate every yard of ground contiguous to our cities and large towns appears to justify the assertion; even the flower-pots which decorate the upper windows in "our good city of London," much as they may endanger the heads of passing travellers, tend to corroborate our character. (*Gardener'sMagazine*, 6, 1831, 116-117.)

'Landscape gardening,' wrote John Claudius Loudon in the first issue of his *Gardener'sMagazine* in 1826, 'about a century ago was as much the fashion as horticulture is at present. Since the beginning of the century, and even before, this taste has been in decline; having given way, first, to war and agriculture, and since the peace to horticulture.'[1] Loudon located the real germ of creative and patriotic horticulture in the gardens which accompanied the new suburban homes of expanding London. Few present-day landscape historians share Loudon's sense of the significance of these new spaces, in large part because they do not gratify the connoisseur's passion for the distinct *oeuvre* found in the gardens designed for the elite. The 'great work' on suburban garden significance proposed by James Kenward starts from the premise that he believed the interest and importance of these spaces rested in the very fact that they were designed, made, and used by their amateur creators. These gardeners learnt their principles of garden design and culture from the plethora of garden literature available and, aided perhaps by the occasional jobbing gardener, cultivated their gardens to suit their individual domestic needs, their whims and their fancies.

As a subject of study, the suburban, domestic, Victorian garden has been caught in a four-way bind. Despite the growing interest in all aspects of domestic gardening evidenced by present-day media, the 'ordinary' villa garden of the last century remains largely unexplored. Landscape and mainstream garden histories have neglected this garden in favour of the great parks and gardens belonging to English seventeenth- and eighteenth-century notables. The conventional tools for reading such landscapes, which emphasise literary and antiquarian methods and models, are largely inappropriate for reading the

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[1] *Gardener'sMagazine*, 1, 1826, 2.

ordinary garden. Horticulture in general, and floriculture in particular, have usually been granted a secondary status within landscape studies and critical garden history. The culture of ornamental plants for the improvement of the domestic environment is considered as somehow inferior to the development of the eighteenth-century landscape garden. This is because flower gardens are often wrongly assumed to have been absent or insignificant in the 'Georgian' garden, the latter occupied with cultivating the 'higher' concerns of poetic sensibilities and civic husbandry. Landscape gardens, however, were not always understood in such elevated and altruistic terms; nor were flower-gardens without their claims to horticultural patriotism. On the rare occasions where such gardens have been the subject of study, their interpretation is usually situated within a trickle-down model of emulative consumption. This thesis challenges the simplistic interpretation of the flows of garden fashion, emphasising instead the creative horticultural energies which distinguished the emerging middle class of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In so doing it draws upon recent anthropological and geographical understandings of the relationships between social formations and symbolic and material landscapes.

It is this continued association with domesticity which has acted more generally as a second-bind on the study of the villa garden. The flower-garden or 'parterre', laid out before the French-windows of the ladies' drawing-room, a medium between the domestic interior and the garden's less ordered lawns and shrubbery, has been tainted as a subject of 'serious' academic enquiry by its association with domestic space and feminine consumption. Traditional social history prioritised public spheres of production and consumption, at the expense of their more private expressions. As many feminist historians have noted, those spaces associated with women, and the unpaid labour which takes place there, have been relatively neglected until recently. Ironically, the recovery of domestic experience has usually failed to open the French-windows and leave the drawing-room. This is mainly because the garden is seen as an anomalous space within the supposedly private domestic sphere, a space which is seen both as an extension of feminised domestic space, yet also as a site of masculine domesticity. Because architectural historians continue to take at face value those deconstructions of 'villa suburbia' which

present 'the suburban home as a comfortable prison for the wife in particular',[2] they have tended not to ask questions about domestic masculinity. Rather than trying to demarcate the suburban garden along artificially gendered lines, this thesis explores interwoven geographies of identity as they were manifest there.

Thirdly, the suburb and its culture have been the subject of ridicule and derision for as long as they have existed in their modern forms. This is owing partly to their location on the fringes of supposedly sophisticated metropolitan culture, and partly to the perception of their *nouveaux riches* occupants as ineptly emulative of elite culture. Further, the annexing of middle-class patriotism and Self Help with horticultural consumption and the public display of luxury goods in the domestic environment seems to have been too much for most landscape historians to stomach. The suburb has become the stereotypical environment of the middle classes, whose culture has been subjected to less attention than those of the powerful or the urban and rural working classes. This differently symbolic domestic landscape seems so far removed from those self-consciously learned interpretations of earlier landscape formations which focus upon literary and classical significance as to appear of a totally separate discipline. The little mention that has been made of gardens in the new revisionist histories of suburban culture have been almost exclusively concerned with twentieth-century developments.

Finally, one feature common to early twentieth-century modernism, in all its various guises, was a rejection of the Victorian, a culture of critical disparagement which continues to exert its influence even upon late twentieth-century scholarship. The children of 'eminent Victorians', painted Victorian domestic culture as stultifying, oppressive and repressive, a theme that received new impetus in the 1970s with feminist interpretations of the 'Angel in the House'. Both the inside and the outside of the Victorian domestic environment have been characterised as cluttered and congested, because they have been suffused with the alleged oppression of their occupants. This continuing antipathy and prejudice towards Victorian material culture, particularly in its domestic form, has added

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[2]Donald J. Olson, *The City as a Work of Art*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 159.

the fourth 'bind' to a catalogue of historiographical biases which altogether has rendered the study of the suburban, domestic, Victorian garden deeply *infra dig*.

2.1. Landscape Theory and the Villa Garden

In his introduction to *The Anthropology of Landscape* Eric Hirsch likens landscape to the body in that 'despite its ubiquity it has remained largely unproblematized' in anthropological accounts.[3] He continues, 'although landscape has been singled out here as a distinct cultural idea and analytical concept it is in fact difficult to isolate it from a number of related concepts, including place and space; inside and outside; image and representation.'[4] Hirsch explains how 'landscape [...] emerges as a cultural process' with recourse to a 'two poles' theory of 'foreground actuality and background potentiality'.[5] The former is described as the 'context and form of the everyday', and the latter as 'the context and form of experience beyond the everyday'.[6] The structure thus allows for a reading of landscape that can move beyond the Cartesian to the subjective, which, as Hirsch notes, 'has been of central concern to the way the concept of landscape has been taken up in geography and anthropology'.[7]

The collected essays contained in Hirsch's volume share with those in W. J. T. Mitchell's *Landscape and Power* the same methodological aim of changing '"landscape" from a noun to a verb'.[8] In focusing upon the subjectivity of landscape, and the tensions between 'space and place; inside and outside; image and representation', to which we might add present and past, we find not one but many landscapes, sometimes conflicting yet existing simultaneously in time and place. As Simon Schama continually reminds readers of *Landscape and Memory*, 'landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the

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[3]Eric Hirsch, in E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon, (eds.), *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 1.

[4]Hirsch and O'Hanlon, *Anthopology of Landscape*, 1995, p. 4.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 5.

[6]*Ibid*, p. 4.

[7]*Ibid*, p. 8.

[8]W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Introduction' in W. J. T. Mitchell, (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 1.

imagination projected onto woods and water and rock.'[9] However, it seems perverse to overstate the active meaning of landscape; the exclusively verbal appropriation of this noun underestimates the impact that landscape has on human relations. It is probably more fruitful to consider the interplay between the two, which the essays contained in both volumes certainly do. But, with Schama, I perceive that the greater impact is in reverse to their general thrust: culture creates landscapes of the imagination and constructs their subsequent representation and consumption.

In the light of this, one of the most interesting and useful chapters in *The Anthropology of Landscape* for our purposes, is Nicholas Green's study of the nineteenth-century Parisian middle classes and their particular experience of landscape in relation to contemporary elite 'codes of appreciation'. In a sensitive account, he illustrates that 'what comes across from the historical evidence is how marginal and ineffective were these elite traditions' in influencing the taste of the middling classes. Far from reflecting a 'trickle down' of aesthetic culture, Green shows how there developed an independent tradition of landscape fashioned from and adapted to the needs and desires of a newly expanded economic and social class. As it could not claim ancient rites of ownership of land other than that occupied by the house and garden, 'this was a culture of modernity which hinged on a distinctive principle of spectatorship', and which found expression in all areas of consumption, guided by and responding to an impressive media machine.[10] Ann Jensen Adams has also explored the role of the consumer/spectator in the commodification of a specific typology of landscape representation. Adams' focus for the 'complex contemporary issue of identity formation' is the consumption of landscape imagery by the Dutch commercial classes in the mid-seventeenth century. Her subjects, too, demonstrate acute aesthetic taste. And, like Green's nineteenth-century French consumers of landscape and landscape representations, they privileged certain landscapes, in different fashion from

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[9]Simon Schama, *Landcape and Memory*, (HarperCollins, 1995), p. 61.

[10]Nicholas Green, 'Looking at Landscape: Class Formation and the Visual' in Hirsch *et al*, *Anthropology of Landscape*, 1995, p. 38.

the upper classes, as a result of their own economic, social and cultural circumstance.[11] More relevant to my own research perhaps, being concerned with the consumption of actual landscapes (as opposed to their representations) are Tom Williamson's extensive surveys of the eighteenth-century landscape park and garden. Williamson makes the most complete case for a distinct culture of landscape within the gardens of gentry classes in the country. His engagement with archaeological method offers scope for the application of a version of his brand of landscape history, what he calls 'gardens and society', to other landscape cultures.[12] In each of these studies, which cover variously three centuries of 'grounded' landscapes and their reproduction as items for visual and literary consumption, emulation or 'trickle down' theories of design, consumption and meaning proved inappropriate tools for the recovery of upper middle-class garden culture.

My own research reveals the distinct form of the gardens belonging to middle-class, ideally suburban homes of nineteenth-century London. Being markedly smaller than the type of gardens covered by Williamson's studies, these suburban or 'villa' gardens were even less likely to be self-consciously emulative of landed estates. Nor were they likely to repeat the patterns which typically accompanied urban townhouses which, as demonstrated by Todd Longstaffe Gowan's extensive research into Georgian town gardens, are shown to be the cultural and economic antecedents of nineteenth-century suburban grounds.[13]

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[11]Ann Jenson Adams, 'Competing Communities in the "Great Bog of Europe", Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting', in Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, 1994.

[12]Thomas Williamson,'Gardens and Society in 18th Century England' in Stephen Lubar and W. David Kingery (eds.), *History from Things, Essays on Material Culture*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993); Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes, Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); see also Anthea Taigel and Tom Williamson, 'Some Early Geometric Gardens in Norfolk'. This is a massive feat of garden and landscape research published in 'gazeteer' form in a whole issue of *Journal of Garden History*, 11 (1 and 2), 1991, where Williamson and Taigel argue persuasively for a separate culture of gentry gardens which was neither defined by nor emulative of aristocratic estate design.

[13]Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, 'Proposal for a Georgian Town Garden in Gower Street: the Francis Douce Garden, *Garden History*, 15 (2), 1987, (136-144); 'Gardening and the Middle-Classes 1700-1830', in Mireille Galinou, (ed.), *London's Pride, the Glorious History of the Capital's Gardens*, (Anaya Publishers, 1990); 'Private Urban Gardening in England, 1700-1830: on the Art of Sinking' in John Dixon Hunt and

They also varied in appearance, use and, most opaquely, the meanings with which they were invested; such variables might be influenced by minute differences in 'rank' and might be as numerous and complex as the so-called middle classes themselves. Many distinctions may now be as indiscernible as the shape of the gardens themselves: perhaps they have been swept away, built upon, or 'restored' to a state of wholly new form and function. Alternatively, differences, where they were perceived as such, frequently had nothing to with social class at all. Geography and even climate, could vary even within an apparently clearly defined area like London; these factors also had played a part in directing the appearance of the suburban villa garden between 1815-1914.

Ultimately gardening, even for a self-professed member of Britain's 'nation of gardeners', was as much a matter of luck as judgement. Clearly, fashions influenced the numbers of horticultural choices on offer - plants, layout, methods of culture etc. - but fashions travelled 'up' and sideways as well as 'down'. And fashions changed while gardens, or gardeners, did not: then as now, few non-professional gardeners made radical alterations to their plots, once the basic structure was in place, which could, in many cases be decades or even centuries, old. Further, as Williamson has sensibly observed, 'nostalgia for old styles, ignorance of and dislike of the new could all affect the appearance of parks and gardens';[14] he also recommends that we bear in mind the 'evolutionary dead end' to counter the Whiggish tendency which prevails in many current garden histories.[15] Hence it was primarily in new domestic gardens that cutting-edge style was achieved and, while most plots could accommodate the occasional new shrub, the majority had their periodical updating restricted to the seasonal planting of bulbs and annuals and the replacing of dead wood.

Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, (eds.), *The Vernacular Garden*, (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture 14, 1990); and 'The London Town Garden 1700-1830, the Experience of Nature in the Eighteenth-Century City', (unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 1990), 'Conclusion'.

[14]Williamson, *Gardens and Society*, 1993, p. 97.

[15]*Ibid*, p. 106.

The transmission of taste which influenced the form of the nineteenth-century suburban garden then, did not as Amanda Vickery has shown in an eighteenth-century context, 'filter [...] out through the gentry to the provinces and trickle [...] down to the lowly via uppity tradespeople and artful servants' but circulated unevenly though a variety of dedicated media.[16] Suburban gardens, have too often been classified - or, more often, caricatured - as being little more than pared-down versions of gentry estates; yet, as with the landscapes consumed by Green's and Adams' subjects, historical evidence shows that not only were parks and gardens experienced differently according to class, but that their design was directly informed by contemporary cultural practice to serve discrete social and familial needs. As Mitchell suggests, 'landscape circulates as a medium of exchange, a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity.'[17] Apart from other people's gardens which, with public parks and commercial nurseries, provided the most immediately accessible forms of horticultural influence, the main channel of information and ideas to arm-chair and active gardeners was the wide range of horticultural and domestic improvement magazines serving geographically and socially delineated categories of householder, such as might live, for example, in 'either a country villa or a London suburban residence.'[18] In fact, the gardening press frequently complained that the upper classes were failing in their duty to set standards.

During the nineteenth century the suburban middle classes increasingly defined themselves in relation to both their 'natural' home environment, with its ordered, abundantly planted and sheltered domestic garden, and in relation to the city. Natural history, concerns for health, cultures of collecting, desire for artistic creativity and theatrical display were all passions which could be satisfied within the domestic environment. We should not make the mistake of thinking suburban garden culture wholly inward-looking, however, for these domestic environments were dependant upon the commercial, scientific

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[16]Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the World of Goods: a Lancashire Consumer and her Possessions, 1751-81', in John Brewer and Roy Porter, (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, (London and New York: Routledge 1993; 1994 paperback edn.).

[17]Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, 1994, p. 2.

[18]*The Ladies Magazine of Gardening*, 1 (1), 1841, 3.

and literary institutions and networks of the urban centre. To plan, prepare, maintain, consume and collect for - and ultimately enjoy - one's garden called for the agency of a wide variety of people, pictures, print and, more prosaically, money, as well as an engagement with the supposedly 'private' domestic sphere. Although concern about unhealthy urban environments was a significant factor governing the increased popularity of suburban migration, the traditions which both public and private gardens shared with spectacle and theatre guaranteed that they never represented a desperate attempt at sanctuary from the city; suburban gardens did not operate ideologically or practically in opposition to the city, they were, in fact, its complement.

Anthropological approaches have begun to make themselves felt in garden history, particularly in North America, encouraged there by the development of material culture studies. Elizabeth Kryder-Reid has explored the subjectivity of vision in the colonial gardens of eighteenth-century Chesapeake, with a view to 'reconstruct[ing] what the gardens looked like and to investigate how they were perceived by their diverse audience.'[19] By 'read[ing] the ideology of another time as [it was] encoded in the organisation of space' she finds that rather than being rather poor imitations of European gardens, Chesapeake gardens' 'emphasis on the creation of views,' for example '*was as sophisticated as resources would allow.*'[20] Kryder-Reid's essay argues that as vision is culturally constructed we should caution against assuming a common understanding - or view - in this case of a garden, in spite of, or perhaps *because* of, the dominant one from which it was originally shaped. The author is especially perceptive in her discussions of how a 'managed perspective', expressed in a layout which privileged panoramic observation from the house, might be transgressed or subverted by the actions of slaves and children. Her essay concludes by asking whether there is 'any aspect of vision in the garden which is universal or is the relativity implied by the subjectivity of vision uncompromising?'[21]

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[19]Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, 'The Archaeology of Vision in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Gardens', *Journal of Garden History*, 14 (1), 1994, (42-54), 43.

[20]Kryder-Reid, *Archaeology of Vision*, 1994, 43, emphasis mine.

[21]*Ibid.*, 51.

If Tom Williamson and Anthea Taigel are deliberately provoking the historian of eighteenth-century parks and gardens with his conventional stress upon painting, poetry and philosophy by suggesting that 'in reality, most gentlemen were predominantly concerned with planting things and killing things',[22] they are surely right to question the ubiquity of a supposedly more spiritual conception of landscape held by elite eighteenth-century man. In his architectural history, *The Building of Castle Howard*, Charles Saumarez Smith notes concordantly that

> There has long been a tendency for garden history to be written by literary historians. There has, therefore, inevitably been a tendency for them to look for an essentially literary significance and meaning in eighteenth-century gardens, to view them in terms of particular Virgilian or Horatian ideals.[23]

He cites Castle Howard's architect as an example of how garden features were intended to be 'items of entertainment, uncontaminated by complex iconographic references':[24]

> Vanbrugh, certainly, was not the type of architect who went round the estate with a copy of learned classical tomes in either hand, pondering on the precise symbolic reference which might be conjured up in the imagination of late twentieth-century professors.[25]

Moreover, Vanbrugh's client, the third Earl of Carlisle's projections onto the gardens and surrounding landscape seem to have been of an earthy, erotic nature, rather than steeped in classical iconography and philosophy.

Kryder-Reid acknowledges that non-literary questions about the meaning of landscape are rarely asked except by garden archaeologists (in which category Williamson and Taigel are included) and cultural geographers: 'rather than being the handmaiden of history archaeology is seen by these scholars as contributing to historical discourse by interpreting the past through its material and written remains.' Further, she suggests that by asking 'questions of the landscape [...] such as the negotiations of social status, in the

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[22]Quoted in Stephen Bending, review of *Parks and Gardens*, by Anthea Taigel and Tom Williamson, *Journal of Garden History*, 15 (1), 1995, 189.

[23]Charles Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard*, (1990; Pimlico, 1997), p. 154. The author acknowledges Tom Williamson's work as one constructive alternative approach.

[24]Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard*, 1997, p. 151.

[25]*Ibid*, pp. 149-151.

relations of labour implicated in the production and consumption of these landscapes and symbolic meanings encoded and enacted in these spaces', we can reveal not only uses other or contradictory to the dominant one(s) but explore 'vernacular gardens or landscapes associated with marginalised people' on their own terms. Such uses have been obscured historically, she says, 'because the focus [has been] the site itself, not the people who inhabited it or the meanings it had.'[26]

David E. Soper's treatment of *The Landscape of Home* is pertinent here; it argues that 'the overriding meaning of the landscape of home is social'.[27] 'Private images of [...] landscapes have not been the particular focus of research on cognition of the environment'.[28] Unusually, he suggests that documentary 'guides to attitudes to home and images of it' may be found in 'surveys, autobiographical accounts, and field observations' supplemented with literary references, and 'poetry and folk sayings'. The essay 'explores the discrepancy between image and reality'[29] and positions itself against phenomenological approaches because 'our experience of any landscape through the senses is inseparable from the social and psychological context of the experience. It is puzzling that geographers who write in a phenomenological mode often fail to make this point.'[30] Despite the fact that a reading of his suggested sources tends to indicate a *dialogue* rather than discrepancy between the image and reality of 'home regions', (which concept he acknowledges to be ragged and elastic), Soper's exercise in examining 'ordinary' landscapes and their imputed meanings has much to recommend it to historians of ordinary gardens. Peirce Lewis' *Common Landscapes as Historical Documents* is also concerned with recovering the consumption or social use of 'ordinary' landscapes. His approach to what he calls the

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[26]Kryder-Reid, 'Review' of *Garden Archaeology*, by A. E. Brown (ed.), *Journal of Garden History*, 14 (1), 1994, 64-65.

[27]David E. Soper, 'The Landscape of Home: Myth, Experience and Social Meaning', in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, D. W. Meinig, (ed.), (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1979), p. 138.

[28]Soper, *Landscape of Home*, 1979, p. 138.

[29]*Ibid*, p. 129.

[30]*Ibid*, p. 138.

'material geographical record' is more practically guided, however, and advises the use of fieldwork when teaching his students to 'read' landscape from different perspectives.[31]

'Ordinary' and 'common' are preferable to 'vernacular' as terms which describe everyday or popular landscapes. Even where the word is used in its proper sense to mean localised, the vernacular adjective confers upon its subject the unbidden distinction of being at best 'other' to mainstream, fashionable culture, and at worst of being a sort of backward provincial cousin loping in the shadow of its more important metropolitan relative. Some writers favour the term vernacular to describe certain landscapes and gardens on the grounds that there are undoubtedly localised patterns to all sorts of landscape culture. But the adjective does not satisfactorily allow for a reading of 'ordinary' material geography which develops at a different but no less complex or fast a pace than the (often elusive) model against which it is measured.[32]

These approaches conspire to construct a home landscape which is at once constitutive of and constituted by social relations and cultural behaviour. Together, they suggest a method for exploring the physical and psychic landscapes which made up the nineteenth-century villa garden, a space which, as John Dixon Hunt has acknowledged was 'now reinvented for consumption by a single person, or by a very small group'.[33]

2.2. The Flower-Garden and the Landscape

Recent studies in the field of garden history have shown that far from dying out in the landscaping movements of the eighteenth century, the flower-garden flourished in the grounds of country houses and suburban villas right up to the post-Napoleonic war years when my thesis period begins. It is often suggested that the fashion for flower-gardening

[31]Peirce Lewis, 'Common Landscapes as Historical Documents', in S. Lubar and W. D. Kingery, (eds.), *History From Things, Essays on Material Culture*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), pp. 119 and 137.

[32]See, for example, John Dixon Hunt and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, (eds.), *The Vernacular Garden*, (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, 14, 1993); and Judith Roberts, 'Researching the Vernacular Garden', *Landscape Research*, 21 (2), 1996, (175-187).

[33]John Dixon Hunt, 'The Garden as Cultural Object', in Stuart Wrede and William Howard Evans, (eds.), *Denatured Visions, Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: MoMA, 1991), p. 29.

was reintroduced by the landscape gardener and writer Humphry Repton (1752-1818) at the turn of eighteenth century. Repton himself had written in 1808 that 'there are few places in which the character of a garden is preserved near the house; and, therefore, a detached place, called the flower garden, has been set apart, occasionally at such an inconvenient distance, that it is seldom visited.'[34] However, while Repton was undoubtedly instrumental in focusing attention back onto the house, he should be credited with the reinvigoration of a long-standing English gardening tradition which embraced horticulture, as well 'improving' the more distant grounds. Anthea Taigel and Tom Williamson's study of early geometric Norfolk gardens has shown that many gentry families chose not to uproot their seventeenth-century gardens, comprised largely from sparsely planted (by modern standards) flowers, trees and shrubs in bare earth or contrasting gravels and sand, in favour of acres of seemingly unadorned turf.[35] The reasons for this widespread rejection of new landscaping fashion remain unclear but were probably a combination of apathy, concerns about expenditure, fear of change and simply, contentment with the status quo. In any case, as we have seen, flower-gardening remained an integral part of the eighteenth-century park, even when an estate had been radically improved in other areas.

In a review of Douglas D. C. Chambers' *The Planters of the English Landscape Garden, Botany, Trees and the Georgics*, another historian of the eighteenth-century landscape garden, Edward S. Harwood, remarks that 'garden historians have been remiss in largely dismissing horticultural matters as somehow secondary to the "meaning" of [Georgian] landscapes and their formal and theoretical development.'[36] Accordingly, he shows how Chambers'

> approach [...] undermine[s] [...] the interpretative hegemony exercised by literary and art historians who have privileged their ideas of

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[34]Humphry Repton, *Designs for the Brighton Pavillon*, 1808, quoted in Geoffrey Taylor, *The Victorian Flower Garden*, (Skeffington, 1952), p. 92.

[35]Anthea Taigel and Tom Williamson, 'Some Early Geometric Gardens in Norfolk', *Journal of Garden History*, 11 (1 and 2), 1991.

[36]Edward S. Harwood, 'Review' of *The Planters of the English Landscape Garden, Botany, Trees and the Georgics* by Douglas D. C. Chambers, *Journal of Garden History*, 15, (1), 1995, 49.

> expertise. This has resulted, [he] would argue, in a decidedly truncated appreciation of these landscapes with regard both to aesthetics and meanings, for the material world of plants and planting practices were important determinants in their appearances and in their meanings.[37]

Mark Laird has made the greatest contribution to this revisionist garden history by locating the flower-garden in its rightful place within the eighteenth-century park. *Ornamental Planting and Horticulture in English Pleasure Grounds 1700-1830*, makes empirical use of planting plans for flower-gardens to reconstruct the Picturesque grounds of the period in their entirety, while adding to the theoretical debates around their omission from normative histories of Georgian gardens.[38] Though still thin on the ground, these debates are correcting the imbalance for the eighteenth century.

Many contemporary writers stressed the special relationship of gardening to peacetime. This was misleading as the continued but quiet popularity of the flower-garden throughout the eighteenth century makes clear. However, as present-day historians have shown, it was prudent to concentrate on the cultivation of timber throughout the turbulence occasioned by the wars with France,[39] especially as timber for the Navy in this period came overwhelmingly from private landowners rather than royal estates.[40] For historians, peacetime has not traditionally been considered as exciting or important a subject as a country united at war. Loudon, writing only a decade after the Battle of Waterloo on the demise in the fashion for landscape gardening, appeared to be a dispassionate observer when he noted that 'since the beginning of the present century, and even before, this taste has been in decline; having given way, first, to war and agriculture, and since the peace to horticulture', but he was also encouraging latent flower-gardeners to cast off their pre-

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[37]Harwood, *Review*, 1995, 48.

[38]Mark Laird, 'Ornamental Planting and Horticulture in English Pleasure Grounds 1700-1830', in John Dixon Hunt, (ed.), *Garden History: Issues, Approaches, Methods*, (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Publishing Service, 1992).

[39]See, for example, Stephen Daniels, 'The Political Iconography of Woodland' in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 1995, pp. 163-165.

[40]Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, (1983; Penguin Books, 1984), p. 210.

Peace inhibitions.[41] If flower-gardening had been marginalised, being both unmanly and unpatriotic especially in times of war when food and timber were naturally endowed with more *public* importance than ornamental gardening, the British people would need re-educating, which mission Loudon took very seriously. As Linda Colley wryly remarks, this was also the period when

> Voluntary associations were breaking out like measles over the face of Britain and the rest of Europe [...] especially in towns, and almost exclusively among men. There were street clubs, patronised by the leading inhabitants of a particular district, clubs devoted to hobbies, everything from rose-growing to cruel sports and idiosyncratic sex, innumerable Masonic and quasi-Masonic societies catering to the male delight in secret rituals and dressing up.[42]

Rather than fearing accusations of 'cultural treason' occasioned by involvement in activities with potentially effeminate and even Gallic associations, men's passion for flowers, finery and the like, positively bloomed, clothed in a rhetoric of 'rational', 'scientific', and 'patriotic' endeavour. Women had no need for such subterfuge. Floriculture was so intimately bound up with notions of the domestic and feminine that even the most ardent proponents of the new domestic ideology could not fault the respectable middle-class wives and daughters who planned, planted and pleased themselves in their gardens.

In his book *Man and the Natural World* (1983), Keith Thomas offered a rare, if indirect, acknowledgement of the impact made upon the English landscape by the newly elevated domestic environment of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, he says,

> there occurred an expansion in flower-gardening on a scale so enormous as to justify our adding to all the other revolutions of the early modern period another one: the Gardening Revolution.[43]

Professor Thomas' epithet is well chosen, this was a revolution in the proper sense of the word: the English garden had returned to its horticultural roots after more than a century in the landscaped wilderness. Humphry Repton's variety of landscape gardening, although

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[41] *Gardener'sMagazine*, 1, 1826, 5.

[42] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 88.

[43] Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, (1983; Penguin, 1984), p. 224.

part of a wider movement concerned with theory more than practice, can be accredited to some large extent with oiling the cogs of this revolution. His practice, which flourished at the turn of the eighteenth century, made a broad cultural impact in his own lifetime, most probably because it differed so radically in appearance and ideology from the previous generation's landscape garden. But it was also for the very important fact that his plans were suited to less expansive villa grounds of gentry circles and the growing upper-middle commercial classes wanting an 'estate' or 'park' appropriate to their station. 'Mr. Repton', 'or anybody of that sort' was recommended by Miss Bertram for the improving and planting of *Mansfield Park*.[44] The 'improvements' of the Park which meant to 'give it a modern dress' were also observed in other Austen novels, suggesting that Repton was a household name to a certain class of novel reader, as well as to those who could afford to patronise him.[45] The improvements at Sotherton House, across the park from Mansfield, included a terrace, flower-garden, shrubbery, pheasantry, and wilderness. Under Repton's direction 'improvements' were made to some 220 sites across England. Many of these modernised landscapes, mostly the grounds of country seats, were reproduced for public perusal in book form, including *Sketches and Hints* on landscape gardening (1795), *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1803), *An Inquiry into the Changes in Taste in Landscape Gardening* (1806), and, perhaps most famously, *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816). Despite its title, this last book also included hints on the improvement of home interiors. The grounds upon which Repton had perhaps most dramatic impact were those nearest to the house. These comprised the 'home landscape' and Repton, like the designers of all persuasions who succeeded him, determined that this was the landscape where horticulture should prevail. After nearly a century of warfare, the flower-garden had settled peacefully before the

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[44]Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (1814; Wordsworth Editions, 1993), pp. 39, 40, 41, 42.

[45]He also undertook commissions for members of her family. See Mavis Batey, *Regency Gardens*, (Princes Risborough, Bucks: Shire Garden History, 1995). Repton designed a bathing house for a member of the family at Addlestrop, Glos., and improved her mother's ancestral home at Stoneleigh, near Bath, (pp. 13, 22, 29).

drawing-room windows, and would remain there for the rest of the century. Here, sheltered by the villa, the 'gardening revolution' had come full circle.

Repton and his work were part of a larger cultural movement which was paying increased attention to all aspects of domestic life at the close of the eighteenth century. The spectre of republican France loomed large and fear of revolution and civil unrest at home was very real. Protestant Nonconformity which had long emphasised temperance, clean living and family loyalty would increasingly eulogise the home, so that by the time of the rise of Evangelical Anglicanism made famous by members of the Clapham Sect in the 1790s, many of the former's adherents were ready to embrace the more pro-active sermonising preached by the latter. Concerns about soldiers' fitness, meanwhile, prompted less religiously-inspired enquiries into the physical as well as the moral and political state of the nation, all of which routes led inexorably back into the Home. The 1801 Census effectively marked the beginning of a period of statutory investment in the workings of the Englishwoman's castle. Thus, at the time of the Peace a series of interconnected occurrences, including government acts, religious fervour, social activity and cultural change had coalesced at a point which would grant an almost public status to all things domestic. The impact of this new domestic scrutiny upon gardens was immediate. In the first place they received more attention, being the first point of contact in the newly illuminated domestic sphere. Secondly, because gardens by their nature also provided some welcome distance, they were increasingly the subject of reams of advice. It was no coincidence that gardening handbooks proliferated in the period, even allowing for the repeal of paper rationing: many were thinly disguised recipes for domestic improvement, calculated by their writers to be less intrusive than texts which targeted the sanctity of home interiors.

If horticulture - or floriculture and other gardening forms particularly associated with the home - begins to be considered as seriously as other supposedly more cerebral aspects of garden design - elevated to the more important category of 'landscape' design and history - we should begin to see the impact of this upon the history of nineteenth-century gardens, and to the suburban, domestic garden of that period, in particular.

Chapter Four considers how the characterisation of the suburban environment and its individual gardens as feminine by contemporary horticultural and architectural critics incurred a specifically misogynistic tone to their garden descriptions. Criticism of conventional 'Victorian' middling-class gardening practice of the sorts characterised as 'pastry-work gardening', epitomised in the Crystal Palace grounds at Sydenham, was written through with gender, class and, to a lesser extent, race and ethnic prejudice. The conception of certain sorts of gardening as feminine or effeminate went hand-in-hand with 'juvenile' or 'puerile' labels which were attached to the sorts of so-called poor gardening taste throughout the century. The feminisation of 'poor' or 'inappropriate' taste in the garden was often conflated with that of the uncultivated savage or the ex-colonial, in such a fashion as to anticipate the Modernist architect Adolph Loos' theory of *Ornament and Crime* (1908).[46] These characteristics were also invested in the wider villa environment, and reputedly expressed the world-view and moral values of suburban home-makers themselves.

2.3. Horticulture and the Home: the Inseparable Spheres of the House and Garden.

Feminist history and gender studies have either neglected the garden in their histories of the domestic interior or, curiously, reversed the gender stereotype of suburban garden space to present it as a masculine preserve. I will show that such easy distinctions between different spaces or spheres cannot be made within the suburban garden, even when didactic literature recommended them. Indeed, so strong are the ties between inside and outside that it has been neither useful nor possible to separate them entirely.

Despite recent revisionism, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's monumental work, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class*, remains the conceptual underpinning for many accounts of the 'domestic sphere' published since it first appeared in 1987. *Family Fortunes* built upon a body of research by its authors and other feminist

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[46]See Adolf Loos, *Trotzdem 1900-1931*, (Innsbruck, 1931).

historians undertaken from the late 1960s.[47] Subsequent criticism of this work has focused on its basic premise, that men and women occupied 'separate spheres': the public world and the private home. It has been argued that not only are these spheres are overly polarised but that their very existence should, at the very least, be problematised. In addition, the periodisation of *Family Fortunes* between 1780 and 1850 has been questioned. Here the issue has been whether these seventy years - or those containing the 'classic' Industrial Revolution - were especially germane to a newly insistent form of domestic ideology which conspired to lure women of the middle classes back into their homes.[48] In a collection of essays published as *White, Male and Middle Class*, Hall reiterated her thesis that during the nineteenth century 'home became the sphere of women and the family; the world outside became the sphere of men.'[49] Now, whatever we may think of the notion that men were not part of the family, should we really concur that at some point after 1780 England was so neatly divided? Even a cursory glance at the thousands of widely accessible paintings, prints and photographs issued during the nineteenth century demonstrates the existence of a public landscape that was physically occupied by as many middle-class women as men.

It has been suggested that more thoughtfully elucidated and relatively nuanced histories of women's lives may be attained by returning to primary sources as a way of countering the information put out by contemporaneous prescriptive texts. The historian Amanda Foreman's research, like Linda Colley's, finds that the 'vociferous critics who called for women to remain in the domestic sphere were fighting a rearguard action against the great number who were already outside it.'[50] Foreman's biography of *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (1757-1806), shows that 'male and female relations were robust, multi-layered and contradictory'

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[47]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (1987; Routledge, 1994 edn.)

[48]See Amanda Vickery's historiographical review of the categories and chronology of English women's history, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36, 1993, (383-414).

[49]Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class, Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 85.

[50]Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, (HarperCollins, 1998), p. 404; Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, 1992, p. 241.

during the eighteenth century because '[n]either the public and private nor the social and political realms existed as separate entities'. She suggests that 'a more appropriate model for the eighteenth century would be one of interlocking spheres, recognising the flexibility of social conventions of the era'.[51] Lawrence Klein's deconstruction of separate spheres theory begins more tentatively because he has moved from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century:

> most historians agree that over the course of the eighteenth century, and more insistently into the nineteenth, a private and public sphere were constructed ideologically and endowed with gender and class meaning. But the degree to which in practice families actually adhered to "separate spheres" ideology remains the subject of much debate.[52]

His subjoinder to this analysis is deceptively simple: 'if we are to provide an analysis of the gendering of space that takes account of the distinction between "public" and "private," we need to know what these terms meant to contemporaries.'[53] Although most of Klein's 'contemporaries' belonged to the eighteenth century, the meanings inferred from their understanding of public and private might equally be conferred upon their nineteenth-century descendants. He concludes that

> what people [...] most often meant by "public" was sociable as opposed to solitary (which was "private"). The "public" and the "private" were, thus, aligned with the difference between openness and secrecy, between transparency and opaqueness [...] people at home, both men and women, were not necessarily in private. Even if, then, women spent more time at home, they were not necessarily spending more time in private.[54]

As Amanda Vickery has shown in exposing the weaknesses of Thorstein Veblen's emulation theory, 'the personal significance of inconspicuous consumption'[55] was as important as the moment of purchase for 'the social life of things began once they had been acquired and entered the household.'[56] The inconspicuous consumption of items for the

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[51]Foreman, *Georgiana*, 1998, p. 404.

[52]Lawrence E. Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions About Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29 (Fall), 1995, (97-109), 101.

[53]Klein, *Gender and the Public/Private Distinction*, 1995, 103.

[54]*Ibid*, 104-105.

[55]Vickery, *Women and the World of Goods*, 1994, p.

[56]*Ibid*, p.

garden allowed its subjects to connect with a broader, less physically definite world. This was because, as Hirsch suggests 'the "here and now-ness" of place expands to a more distant horizon, constituted by past, and ongoing relationships such as garden-making and home-building.'[57] More simply, as Vickery puts it, 'things conjured the past and ensured continuity into the future'.[58] In *Aristocrats*, the historical biography of the Lennox family between 1740 and 1832, Stella Tillyard notes how one daughter, the increasingly dislocated Sarah, found that 'tending her garden [was] a way of rooting herself in her new environment,' as she came to terms with the irrevocable collapse of her disastrous marriage. Sarah's gardening, despite the great extent of the grounds, was a private expression of both her present grief and her faith in the future, its function was never simply a public statement of her family's economic wealth and political influence.[59] To her elder sister Emily, on the other hand, the garden presented not only an arena in which to register her household management skills and general domestic prowess, it was symbolic of her wider marital authority. Tillyard shows that any distinctions between private and public activity, the 'two hemispheres of consumption' were

> honoured more in the breach than in the observance. While the Duke was the original designer of the park, its final shape owed a good deal to Emily's whims and famous lack of patience. Moreover, when in 1755 Arthur Devis painted the couple outdoors surveying their domain, it was Emily and not her husband who was holding the plans of the grounds.[60]

Like Colley, Foreman, Tillyard and Vickery, whose primary historical periods have been the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, historians of the later nineteenth century have also studied primary sources as a way of usefully testing separate spheres theory. Roger Cooter's study of *Harriet Martineau and Mesmerism*, for instance, finds that 'Martineau's life-

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[57]Hirsch, 'Introduction', in Hirsch and O'Hanlon, *Anthropology of Landscape*, 1995, p. 9.

[58]Vickery, *Women and the World of Goods*, 1994, p. 22, emphasis mine.

[59]Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats, Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox, 1740-1832*, (1994; Vintage, 1995), pp. 143-144.

[60]Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, 1995, p. 198.

experience mocks simplistic reductions, especially to the ideology of "separate spheres".'[61] Rather than singling her out as unusual, M. Jeanne Peterson places Martineau within 'a tradition of achieving women' in the nineteenth century which likewise refuses such compartmentalisation.[62] Peterson's remarkable history of Victorian gentlewomen privileges status over gender in the social and spatial relationships of her wealthy, educated and well-connected subjects; in fact, 'they differed very little from the leisured gentlemen who pursued a liberal education in philosophy or biology with no need to make a profession or career of such interests.'[63] They were neither confined to their homes nor found them so confining. She concludes that 'either we must abandon the private/public dichotomy, or we must redefine more narrowly the meaning of the public [and private?] sphere[s].'[64]

In 1796 Priscilla Wakefield (1751-1832) wrote *An Introduction to Botany in a Series of Familiar Letters*. With particular reference to women and botany in England between 1760 and 1860, Ann Shteir discusses the growing number of epistolary texts directed to women and children. Botany, she says, 'fit the gendered assumptions of many writers and cultural arbiters about women and domestic ideology and was thought to be a way to shape women, or shape them better, for lives as wives and mothers.'[65] Hence Shteir's inclusion of Wakefield's hopes that women's involvement with botanical enterprise would improve not only their happiness and bodily health but would 'become a substitute for some of the trifling, not to say pernicious, objects, that too frequently occupy the leisure of young ladies of fashionable manners, and, by employing their faculties rationally, act as an antidote to levity and idleness.'[66] Given her focus upon the familiar, the domestic, and the unofficial botanising outside of the Academy, it

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[61]Roger Cooter, 'Dichotomy and Denial: Mesmerism, Medicine and Harriet Martineau', in Marina Benjamin, (ed.), *Science and Sensibility, Gender and Scientific Enquiry, 1780-1945*, (Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 145.

[62]M. Jeanne Peterson, *Family, Work and Love in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 145.

[63]Peterson, *Family, Work and Love*, 1989, p. 57.

[64]*Ibid*, p. 189.

[65]Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760 1860*, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1996), p. 35.

[66]In Shteir, *Cultivating Women*, 1996, p. 86.

seems odd that Shteir upbraids her subject, albeit a middle-aged liberal Quaker with more scope than most for subversion, for being unradical. Wakefield's *An Introduction to Botany*, says Shteir,

> does not challenge dominant ideologies about women, sexuality, politics and religion [...] the sedentary sister at home does not venture beyond the garden and adjacent fields, or beyond domestic ideology. Little can be read as subverting the existing social order.[67]

Quite apart from the fact that this book was intended for young girls (and that in any case English publishers and booksellers may have been reluctant to produce and distribute anything more inflammatory, especially in this post-revolutionary period), it is surprising that a study of domestic science which celebrates the amateur, everyday, and often invisible achievements of women at home should necessarily look further afield for the stirrings of social nonconformity. There are two points which arise immediately from this. The first is that such volumes were 'prescriptive rather than descriptive'[68] and that we have very little idea of how far they were heeded. Indeed, much of the confusion surrounding the 'separate spheres' debate arises from the proliferation of prescriptive literature advocating just such a distinction. Both Jeanne Peterson and Amanda Vickery insist that 'the stress on the proper female sphere in Victorian discourse signalled a growing concern that more women were seen to be active outside the home rather than proof that they were so confined.'[69] The second point questions the validity of equating ideas about the 'private', 'female' or 'domestic' spheres, with passivity, conformity, and all forms of limitation, at all.

With this in mind, we could start by suggesting that women's experience of botany at home in the nineteenth century was on a par with that of their male relatives and friends abroad. That is, they were operating within the limits laid down in contemporary advice books on 'appropriate' or 'polite' knowledge and behaviour for respectable women.

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[67]*Ibid*, p. 86.

[68]Vickery, *Golden Age to Separate Spheres*, pp. 383-384; Rosemary O'Day makes the same point about studies of the family which treat 'prescriptive sources as though they were descriptive': 'it has been only too easy for churchmen, educators, governments and civil servants, as well as historians and social scientists, to believe that the family is indeed what they would like it to be.' *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900, England, France and the United States of America*, (Macmillan, 1994), p. 29.

[69]Vickery, *Golden Age to Separate Spheres*, p. 400.

Certainly there were complaints and derision issuing from the various related scientific institutions regarding the amateur meddlings of women with their rigorous discipline. However, as Shteir demonstrates so comprehensively, the numbers of women who moved physically and intellectually beyond their supposed 'sphere' make such an explanation unsatisfactory; and even when women were begrudgingly invited to join the higher echelons of the botanical establishment, many more continued to practice at home or to operate independently as authors, explorers and illustrators.

Of those present-day histories of gardening to consider the role of women at all, the great majority consider their input to be at best superficial, at worse superfluous. Those accounts which approach the subject sympathetically, also bring with them their own traditions which can be equally misleading. In keeping with earlier feminist historical 'correctives' the feminist publishing house Virago's highly successful book of *Women Gardeners*, edited by Deborah Kellaway, is, first and foremost, a collection of four centuries of writings by *exceptional* women gardeners and authors. Understandably in an anthology intended for the general reader such a collection makes for more interesting reading than one containing workaday examples of women's horticultural labour. However, given its wide historical scope this popular collection goes a long way to demonstrate the range and scale of women's gardening activity.[70] Keith Thomas's chapter on 'trees and flowers' in his *Man and the Natural World, changing attitudes in England 1500-1800* (1983), should be mentioned here. This book which, despite its title gives more than an introduction to our period, manages to be both detailed and broadly-based in its discussions of men and women's attitudes to plants and gardens well in to the nineteenth century.[71] Another example of a different approach to garden history deserves to be better known. Martin Hoyles's original treatment of the subject arises from a Marxist position concerned with the power relationships between land and labour, production and consumption, men and women, adults and children. Indeed, it is remarkable that two such apparently British preoccupations as gardening and socio-economic class

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[70]Deborah Kellaway, (ed.), *The Virago Book of Women Gardeners*, (Virago Press, 1995). This book is now in its third edition, the last of which appeared in illustrated format. It was also serialised on BBC Radio 4 'Women's Hour' in 1996 and as a short daily reading in its own right the following year.

[71]Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, (1983; Penguin Books, 1984).

configurations have not been so comprehensively conflated before. Hoyles has drawn upon many of the same writings as the Virago collection, with the result that his work also privileges published women gardeners over the purely practical work of others. However, his three books on the history of gardening are possibly unique in drawing out the economic inequalities between male and female garden staff as well as those he perceives in the gender relations of their middle- and upper-class employers.[72]

Predictably, gender relations in the middle-class garden were cast by Davidoff and Hall into separate spheres. Happily, much of their evidence belies their theoretical position, and *Family Fortunes* reveals respectable women who gardened just like their brothers and fathers.[73] Although Leonore Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance and Howard Newby's 1976 essay, *Landscape With Figures: Home and Community in English Society*, claims to be concerned with 'the home and community as ideals'[74] their version of the 'domestic domain', 'this country of the mind', has much to recommend it in actuality. Thus,

> the idea of domesticity as a general good was intimately tied to the powerful symbol of the home as a physical place. The house was both setting and symbol of the domestic community. In the upper-income ranges, the house's carefully guarded entrances with drives, gates and hedges, its attended portals and elaborate rituals of entrance created a sense of security as well as preserving the its inmates rank from pollution by inferiors. Throughout the middle class and in respectable working-class homes, the front privet or iron fence, whitened doorsteps, clean curtains and shining brass door furniture presented the household to "the World".[75]

Even if we accepted as a 'legitimating ideology' that '[w]ives, servants and children, the major constituents of the household, were never to leave the precincts of the "domestic domain" except under closest scrutiny and control' - which they most certainly did - it

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[72]Martin Hoyles, *The Story of Gardening*, (London and Concord, Mass: Journeyman Press, 1991); Hoyles, *Gardening Books from 1560 to 1960*, (1), 'Gardener's Delight', (1994); (2), 'Bread and Roses', (1995).

[73]Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, (1987; Routledge, 1994), pp. 188-192.

[74]Leonore Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance and Howard Newby, 'Landscape with Figures: Home and Community in English Society', in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, (eds.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, (Penguin Books, 1976), p. 143.

[75]Davidoff *et al*, *Landscape with Figures*, 1976, p. 153.

should not surprise the authors that we 'find difficulty in perceiving these phenomena as 'ideology rather than as "reality",' when the examples they give were so deeply influenced by both.[76] If my thesis proves nothing else, it can at least claim that both the ideology and the reality of the household as it related to the worlds of gardening and horticulture were more concerned with class than gender, and that neither sought to confine wives and children to the home. Finally, as we see in Chapter Five, gardening activities were not restricted to the domestic exterior for either sex, being physically and imaginatively connected to suburban, metropolitan and even global cultures of consumption and communication for the domestic, suburban, Victorian garden. England's characterisation as 'a nation of gardeners' between 1815 and 1914, should be seen as representing the country as outward-looking and publicly engaged as well as domestically-minded: indeed, we can see how the undoubted importance of the 'private sphere' during this period was reflected outwards into the 'public' realm.

2.4. The Suburban Garden

Gardening has rarely been considered a revolutionary, or radical, activity; it is more often cited as an example of cultural conservatism and political quiescence among the 'respectable' classes, for which reason gardening was recommended as a panacea for working-class 'problems' caused by cultures of poverty.[77] Class stereotypes continue to be reproduced by historians of the genre, stereotypes which are largely defined by the geography as well as the status of particular landscapes and social relations which these support. Thus allotment-holding has tended to be parcelled off with working-class activism and labour history in both rural and urban areas[78]; the provision of domestic gardens (with strict instructions as to their practical and aesthetic maintenance) in the philanthropic model village environments of industrialists like Cadbury, Lever, and

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[76]*Ibid.*, p. 145.

[77]See Stephen Constantine, 'Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Journal of Social History*, Spring, 1981, (387-406), esp. 390-391.

[78]David Crouch and Colin Ward, (eds.), *The Allotment Its Landscape and Culture*, (Faber & Faber, 1988).

Rowntree have been painted as an exercise in systematic social control.[79] The supposedly non-productive nature of much middle-class suburban gardening, its associations with the 'leisure class' and domestic display have encouraged misplaced accusations of both 'conspicuous waste' and of superficial nature-worship.[80] The land-owning and later the industrial elite, meanwhile, have variously been styled reformers, improvers and colonisers of common land according to the political persuasions of their historian. The little 'history from below' to consider gardens and gardening has, like elite garden history, tended to marginalise middle-class and suburban (horti)culture for being neither radical nor innovative. Typically, Eric Hobsbawm termed Edwardian suburban landscapes composed from 'modest terraced or semi-detached house-and-gardens' as 'fortresses of political conservatism'.[81] Disdained by both the traditional Left and Right, the geography of the ordinary, middle-class, Victorian garden has until now remained virtually untouched by historians.

Suburban gardening has sometimes been sensitively referenced as a subject deserving critical historical attention; but this has usually been in the twentieth-century context of patriotism and conservative modernity between the wars.[82] With the exception of H. J. Dyos's *Victorian Suburb* (1961) which, as its title suggests, was concerned with the broader suburban landscape,[83] explorations of the suburban home which we might expect to reveal sympathetic views of the garden usually confine their histories to the first

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[79]J. E. Kellett, *Public Policy and the Private Garden, An Analysis of the Effect of Government Policy on Private Garden Provision in England and Wales, 1918 1981*, (London, 1983).

[80]See, for example, Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (1899; Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 136-137.

[81]Eric. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, (The History Book Club Ltd., 1968), p. 140.

[82]Alison Light, *Forever England, Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars*, (Routledge, 1993); and Raphael Samuel, 'Exciting to be English' in R. Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, (1), 'History and Politics', (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. xvii-lxvii.

[83]H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb, a Study of the Growth of Camberwell*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1961; 1966).

half of the twentieth century.[84] The best survey of *Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation in the 19th and 20th Centuries* was published in 1981. Its author, Stephen Constantine, began by locating his subject between normative garden histories and histories of leisure which 'tend to refer only briefly and usually disparagingly to the vast majority of gardens with which people are most familiar: their own'.[85] In spite of its brevity this essay, so far as I am aware, has yet to be surpassed.

Modern works devoted to the more popular sorts of Victorian gardening practice often emanate from the pens of committed horticulturists, or those whose interest is in plants rather than social history, drawing on the quantities of contemporary books, periodicals, calendars and pamphlets for illustration and inspiration. Incidentally, much of this material is presently extant and equally accessible to scholar and general audience alike; indeed typical examples of it are presently reproduced in popular volumes of gardening paraphernalia.[86] We might wonder that the quantity and variety of this material, coupled with its distinctively practical and domestic flavour, has rendered it an unpalatable source to those landscape historians preoccupied with matters more theoretical. One of the most eminent in the field, John Dixon Hunt, dismissed a monograph of one late nineteenth-century gardener and his grounds because 'it smacks of antiquarian local history'.[87] The well-travelled subject of this book, Harold Peto, was pleased to call himself an antiquary.

Gillian Darley's stress upon *published* writing when noting the 'inexplicable gap' in

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[84]See, for example, Paul Oliver, Ian Davis and Ian Bentley, (eds.), *Dunroamin: the Suburban Semi and its Enemies*, (Barrie & Jenkins, 1981); Alan A. Jackson, *Semi-Detached London: Suburban Development, Life and Transport*, (George Allen & Unwin, 1973), and *The Middle Classes, 1900-1950*, (Nairn: David St. John Thomas, 1991).

[85]Constantine, 'Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation', *Journal of Social History*, Spring, 1981, (387-406), 385.

[86]See, for example, Maurice Baren, *How it all Began in the Garden*, (Otley, West Yorks: Smith Settle Ltd., 1994); Elizabeth Drury and Philippa Lewis's compilation, *The Victorian Garden Album*, (Collins & Brown Ltd., 1993); and Malcolm Lumb, *Gardening Bygones*, (Seaford, East Sussex: S. B. Publications, 1996).

[87]John Dixon Hunt, 'Review' of *The Book of Iford*, by Harold Peto, *Journal of Garden History*, 15 (1), 1995, 58-59.

the garden history of the Victorian period is important here,[88] because assiduous local historians have long brought attention to both the history of the horticultural press and popular gardening in general, including their importance to provincial economies. These histories span all periods but because the conditions necessary for the expansion of the horticultural industry improved greatly from around the time of Victoria's accession, or after the 1840 slump, many articles focus on the nineteenth century. Papers like these, some of which have been published privately, are deposited in local studies centres across the country.[89] Local councils and history groups sometimes publish such volumes,[90] while old business records have been reproduced in association with surviving horticultural engineering firms.[91] Altogether this material sheds invaluable light on the subject, while the evidence, gleaned from painstaking surveys of documentary and printed sources, serves to illustrate not only the breadth of extant literature but also the popularity of domestic gardening and amateur horticulture historically.

Within the hugely inclusive realm of the garden, then, can be found both a subject of serious academic inquiry in its own right and a medium though which to consider the broader theoretical issues which surround it. I will show how the middling-class home landscape was both constitutive of and constituted by domestic, national and imperial identities, and was at the same time the subject of a viciously anti-suburban rhetoric. Although this sustained attack upon 'suburban' and 'middle class' material culture appears not to have greatly altered the plans made by the villa gardener, it is examined at length

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[88]Gillian Darley, 'Review' of *The Victorian Garden* by Tom Carter and *The Victorians and their Flowers* by Nicolette Scourse, *Journal of Garden History*, 9 (3), 1984, 318-319.

[89]See, for example, John Harvey, *Early Gardening Catalogues*, (London and Chichester: Phillimore & Co., Ltd., 1973); *Early Nurserymen*, (London and Chichester: Phillimore & Co., Ltd., 1974). Tower Hamlets Local Studies Library has a file devoted to correspondance with Mr. Harvey on the subject of local nursery gardens between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

[90]Gay Nightingale, 'The Flower Gardens', *Journal of the Crystal Palace Foundation*, (2), 1992, 9-12; David Solman, *Loddiges of Hackney, 'The Largest Hothouse in the World'*, (Hackney Society, 1997).

[91]D. R. Grace and D. C. Phillips, *Ransomes of Ipswich. A History of the Firm and a Guide to its Records*, (Reading: Institute of Agricultural History, University of Reading, 1975); Carol and Michael Weaver, *Ransomes, 1789-1989, a Bicentennial Celebration*, (Ipswich: Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies Plc., 1989).

because of its distorting influence upon present day garden histories. The adjectives suburban and middle class are subject to manifold interpretations, often serving as convenient linguistic dumping grounds for all that is held to be ostentatious, superficial, competitively acquisitive: in short, all that has traditionally been ascribed to feminised acts of conspicuous consumption, having of and in itself little cultural value. These issues are discussed in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five we see not only the theoretical weaknesses embodied in the epithet 'conspicuous consumption' but also the constructive, discriminating and ultimately pleasurable choices exercised by the women and men engaged with it.

2.5. The Victorian Garden.

In a review of two histories of the 'Victorian' garden published in the mid-1980s, Gillian Darley rightly remarked that 'there is an inexplicable gap in published garden history of the Victorian period; it is dismissed equally by scholars and by those writing for a more general readership.'[92] Tom Carter, whose book *The Victorian Garden* is one of Darley's review subjects, is more explicit in his concern that present-day histories have tended to misrepresent the nineteenth-century garden as having

> only one of two characters - either the cheerful, wholesome innocence of the cottager's plot, or the sterile gloom of artificial parterres, with statuary, carpet-bedding and an edging of monotonous shrubberies and clipped hedges. Between these largely mythical extremes there was an entire range of types.[93]

Two of the best known books on nineteenth-century garden history were published in the 1950s: Geoffrey Taylor's *Some Nineteenth-Century Gardeners* and *The Victorian Flower Garden* are more sensitive and better referenced than many published since.[94] Of more recent titles devoted to the period, the most comprehensive and scholarly remains Brent

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[92]Darley, 'Review', 1984, 318-319.

[93]Carter, quoted in 'Review', 1984, 318.

[94]Geoffrey Taylor, *Some Nineteenth-Century Gardeners*, (Skeffington, 1951); and *The Victorian Flower Garden*, (Skeffington, 1952).

Elliott's *Victorian Gardens*, published in 1986.[95] Apart from a few works which concentrate on a particular aspect of the Victorian garden, such as Joan Morgan's and Alison Richards' *A Paradise out of a Common Field, the Pleasures and Plenty of the Victorian Garden*, (1990) which chronicles head gardeners' provision of edible and ornamental luxuries for the table,[96] the majority of histories of nineteenth-century horticulture lie within encycloapedic garden histories. Notable among these are Eleanour Sinclair Rohde's *The Story of the Garden* (1932),[97] Miles Hadfield's seminal *Pioneers in Gardening* (1955)[98] and *A History of British Gardening* (1960), and Martin Hoyles' *The Story of Gardening* (1991).[99] Other titles, such as *The Genius of Gardening* by Christopher Thacker (1994), and *The National Trust Book of the English Garden* (1990) have a natural bias towards the legacy of elite gardens.[100] One last title should be mentioned here, Michael Waters *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (1988), which is concerned 'to discuss imaginative literature *within the context* of Victorian theory and practice, not to assimilate it to them', and does so, admirably.

Biographers have also traditionally preferred to write either about aristocratic gardeners, women like Gertrude Jekyll,[101] or upwardly-mobile working-gardeners to the

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[95]Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, (Batsford, 1986). Dr. Elliott is the head librarian and archivist of the Royal Horticultural Society's Lindley Library and a regular contributor to the Society's magazine, *The Garden*.

[96]Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, *A Paradise out of Common Field*, (Random Century, 1990). Dr. Morgan trained as a biochemist; both authors acknowledge their debt to Dr. Elliott.

[97]Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, *The Story of the Garden*, (Medici Society, 1932).

[98]Miles Hadfield, *Pioneers in Gardening*, (1955; Bloomsbury, 1998); *A History of British Gardening*, (1960; Penguin Books, 1985).

[99]Hoyles, *Story of Gardening*, 1991.

[100]Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, (Croom Helm, 1979); *The Genius of Gardening, the History of the Gardens in Britain and Ireland*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994); and Richard Bisgrove, *The National Trust Book of the English Garden*, (1990; Penguin Books, 1992).

[101]See, for example, Sally Festing, *Gertrude Jekyll*, (Viking, 1991); Jane Brown, *Gardens of a Golden Afternoon. The Story of a Partnership: Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll*, (Viking, 1982).

aristocracy such as Sir Joseph Paxton.[102] As with all good biography, however, many gardening monographs suggest the wider cultural context; and, particularly in the case of a man like Paxton who was increasingly involved in more popularising schemes, consider the role of gardens and gardening for a broader section of society. Excellent historical biographies of nineteenth-century gardeners certainly exist, but because their subjects are less well-known today than contemporaries such as Paxton they are less widely available. The two independent volumes which deal comprehensively with the expansive career of John Claudius Loudon, the Scot who 'virtually invented the suburban villa garden', were published by American universities in the 1980s.[103] Even these scholarly texts cannot claim to reveal more than a portion of the work undertaken by Loudon from the turn of the century to his death in 1843. Studies of William Cobbett (1762-1835), whose life and work overlapped with the younger Loudon's, focus almost entirely upon the English radical's political activities: Cobbett's thoughts on gardening - detailed incidentally in his better-known works and explicitly in two books devoted to the subject[104] - are barely mentioned.[105] It would seem that serious accounts of what Miles Hadfield called 'the middling class of garden - the sort of garden that most of us have today', and of the middling class of gardener, are simply not considered interesting by biographers and historians, unless their subjects are radical, avant garde, or generally 'unVictorian'.

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[102]See Violet Markham, *Paxton and the Bachelor Duke*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1935); G. F. Chadwick, *The Works of Sir Joseph Paxton*, (Architectural Press, 1961); and John Anthony, *Joseph Paxton*, (Princes Risborough, Bucks: Shire Publications Ltd., 1973).

[103]Elisabeth B. MacDougal, (ed.), *John Claudius Loudon and the Early Nineteenth Century in Great Britain*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, 6, (Washington, DC: Trustees for Harvard University, 1980); and Melanie Louise Simo, *Loudon and the Landscape*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

[104]Cobbett's *Rural Rides* and *Advice to Young Men* both contain substantial amounts of information and advice about contemporary gardening design and culture. His *The American Gardener* of 1821 and *The English Gardener* of 1838 (Oxford: OUP, 1980), the latter published three years posthumously, were, like Loudon's early gardening volumes, horticultural manuals for amateurs as well as professionals.

[105]See, for example, W. Baring Pemberton, *William Cobbett*, (Penguin Books, 1947); and Karl W. Schweizer and John W. Osborne (eds.), *Cobbett in his Times*, (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1990).

The antipathy towards the Victorians and their material culture has led to an unevenness in garden history. The still fairly prevalent hostility to the same period from other intellectual circles, has similarly contributed to the misrepresentation of nineteenth-century domesticity by insisting upon its uniformly claustrophobic atmosphere. At the root of this construction was the following generation's natural rejection of its antecedents values, or at least some of them, in this case as they were manifest in its domestic environment: 'we have torn down the musty hangings which the Victorians erected [...] we are determined to let in the air - to ventilate every corner of our mansion',[106] was a cry commonly made by the children of eminent Victorians.

Like the home interior, the Victorian garden was frequently described by subsequent generations as cluttered, overstuffed, airless and dark: 'choke-muddle' was a complaint often made about the shrubbery at the time. Raphael Samuel has noted the steadily mounting campaign against ivy between the wars which was perceived to be metaphorically and physically strangling the house and home. Ivy and other evergreens, especially parasitic and climbing varieties, have proved potent and lasting icons of the stereotypically stifling interior and exterior of the conventional Victorian home, as the 'enemies of space and light [...] by-word[s] for darkness and claustrophobia.'[107] Rather than being tolerated through lack of choice, ivies and all the evergreens were prized by the 'Victorians' for their year round foliage, embodying life even in the depths of winter. An article 'About Ivy' in the *Floral World* of 1858, for example, praised 'its attachment to ruins, and its evergreen character, rendering it a suitable representative of the Present clinging to the Past'.[108] Seven years later its author, Shirley Hibberd, expanded on the theme of ivy's physical and emotional attachment to historic buildings.

> This holding of the old fabric together may be of further importance in the case of venerable old churches on which *restorers* have cast their Vandalistic and Iconoclastic eyes: perhaps the warden had such a view

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[106]*Eve*, c. 1930, quoted in Cynthia L. White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968*, (Michael Joseph, 1970), p. 94.

[107]Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Vol. 1, 'Past and Present in Contemporary Culture', (Verso, 1994), pp. 211, 224.

[108]*Floral World*, 1 (6), 1858, 131, 144.

> when he laid stress on the conservative principles of his favourite evergreen. How it marries the youth and freshness of the world to things old and crumbling to dust; how it brings the past and present into complete unity, and shows us how "on the faltering footsteps of decay youth presses".[109]

In 1883, another Victorian called these 'noble native evergreens' - 'Ivy, Holly, and Yew' - 'the most precious of all for the British Isles'.[110] This tradition of ivy, Britain's only indigenous evergreen climber, continued a longer, pagan, association with everlasting life. Its absorption into Christianity manifested in churchyard iconography and, with mistletoe, holly, and yew, in decorations at religious festivals. Given that this century saw plant symbolism rendered particularly explicit, where the floral code of the so-called 'Language of Flowers' were widely published, the degree of perversity in failing to understand plants on their own terms is remarkable.

2.6. The Domestic Victorian Suburban Garden.

I have argued that it is the rich seam of domesticity which ran deep and wide through the nineteenth century as well as the adjectives 'suburban' and 'Victorian' which repulses many a present-day historian. Although recent work has begun to challenge such attitudes and assumptions, particularly that informed by poststructuralism and gender studies, none has reconstructed the domestic garden and the family at home who moved in it. It seems a pity that historians of the domestic interior rarely step outside into the garden; for only here, by crossing the threshold, can we really sense how the garden offered a world view from the interior. Not only do we give credence to the idea of claustrophobia by remaining within the Victorian home, but the continued focus upon the 'angel in the house' risks further essentialising woman's historical place by permanently locating her there. Clearly neither the garden nor gardening offered a liberation on a par with universal suffrage, economic and social emancipation or freedom of choice in matters of the mind and body; but perhaps by paying attention to the 'subjectivity of vision' in the ordinary

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[109] *Floral World*, 7 (3), 1864, 65.

[110] William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, (Longman, Green and Co., 1883; 1899), p. 328.

garden we may find that women's horizons were more greatly expanded than history would have us believe.

I hope to show how cultivating, reaping from, reading and writing about, and obtaining and collecting for the garden enabled women to travel vicariously, to freely imagine other places. I suggest also that the garden allowed for an easy interaction of masculinity with domesticity. In a more concrete sense gardening offered the benefits of exercise, light and air: the garden was as much a place of health as of more spiritual modes of renewal. It was also a place for learning. Botany and natural history were popular amateur activities in the period, and connected easily with a passion for gardening. Amateur scientists might practice at home with ease, and evidence suggests that they did so avidly. Their knowledge was shared with family and friends and sometimes with a wider audience, in print and in paint. However, the lessons were not all academic: the moral education of children was frequently undertaken outside, usually by their mothers, and much of it was religious, even evangelical, in tone, at least according to contemporary garden literature. But children were also free to play, or to dig and plant their own patch as they chose. At the same time the garden was a place in which to do nothing, to rest and to think. And finally, we must not let the passage of time blind us to the fun that was had in these gardens, by all ages and both sexes. Academic history often presents the reader with an overly sombre account of its subject, if it is not too concerned with the radical or the salacious. I cannot stress too much the tremendous sense of passion that arises from the pages of all those writing about gardens in the nineteenth century, as well as in others. Delight was shared by the gardener and guest alike; but the senses of pain, loss, and sheer frustration were suffered, as in all gardens at all times, by the gardener alone.

I hope that this research into the quadruple-bind of the *suburban, Victorian* material culture of the *domestic garden* will help to redress the balance in critical landscape history which has so consistently neglected or misrepresented the geography of the nineteenth-century villa garden. Finally, in Brent Elliott's words, 'These, then, were the forces that

shaped the Victorian garden: rapidly changing technology, a new professional group to administer it, and an artistic ferment spread by the proliferating gardening magazines.'[111]

[111]Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, 1986, p. 20.

3. Reconstructing and Representing London Suburban Gardens.

In 1826, the first issue of Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* pronounced confidently that

> the love of gardening is [...] natural to man [...] common to children, and the enjoyment of a garden so congenial to our ideas of happiness, as to be desired by men of all ranks and professions, who toil hard in cities, hoping, with Cowley, one day to retire to "a small house and a large garden."[1]

Chapter Three explores methods and sources for recapturing not only the material 'reality' of the nineteenth-century suburban villa garden, but also its cultural character. It discusses how one can 'read' this garden from a variety of 'factual' and 'imaginative' graphic and textual sources: gardening and other domestic literature, on the one hand, and fiction, social commentary, tourist accounts and 'road-guides', and reminiscence, on the other. However, although the three sections of this chapter seem to be divided according to the factual and imaginative sources described, they are, in fact, only loosely divisible. While the first and second sections consider didactic texts and their uses, the fact that they were written with personal experience and included biographical information means that they also count as 'subjective'. At the same time, the novels, diaries and social surveys discussed in section three, however subjectively interpreted, were also 'factual' accounts; naturally, novelists were also biographers, diarists and social commentators.

We begin with an introduction to nineteenth-century gardening culture through the medium of the horticultural periodical. This permits not only an overview of the growing horticultural publishing industry in the period, but also an introduction to some of the key players in the popularisation of gardening among the middling classes of suburban amateur, to which class many of the journalists belonged, themselves. After a brief overview of the nursery trade and the Horticultural Society of London, those involved with them and their respective publications, this first section focuses on the life and work of three men and their respective circles: John Claudius Loudon,

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[1] *Gardener's Magazine*, 1, 1826, 1.

James Shirley Hibberd and William Robinson. Between them, these three careers, which more than spanned the period between 1815 and 1914, give us a sense of chronology within gardening practice and its print culture of the period. Although, as Donald Freeman has noted, 'a focus on personalities has been more common in historical geography', 'the significance of personality and individual initiative in development studies is often overlooked by economic and cultural geographers accustomed to examining decision-making in the abstract and at the aggregate level'.[2] Here we consider the lives of those prominent in horticultural publishing as an intimate part of their professional activities; life and work were mutually informing. At the same time, it is borne in mind that the printed sources are material objects in their own right, not merely the textual conduits through which to study the material geography of the garden. Such texts ranged from expensive albums of coloured plates with minimal cultural explanations, on the one hand, to cheap, unillustrated pamphlets full of mixed advice, on the other.

Section two examines how this literature became an effective channel for the flow of ideas, advice and plants which circulated among amateur and professional gardeners during the nineteenth century. Using similar material - books and periodicals devoted to domestic improvement - we also consider the 'ideal' or 'model' suburban garden and the sorts of arrangement which enthusiastic amateurs could conceivably hope to attain at home in their own piece of ground. The 'reality' of these plots and their place in the wider landscape is then explored through the use of contemporary maps. Three gardens made for villas in the suburbs of North London during the middle of the nineteenth century make up the geographical focus of this section: Pentonville, Stoke Newington, and Tufnell Park.

The third section builds a up a more nuanced picture of the geography of the garden and its place in the suburban landscape. It is split three ways, and begins with a survey of St. John's Wood, another northern suburb, as it was presented in diaries, 'road-guides',

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[2]Donald B. Freeman, 'Hill Stations or Horticulture? Conflicting Imperial Visions of the Cameron Highlands, Malaya', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 25 (1), 1999, (17-35), 20.

and contemporary novels. Between the 1820s and the 1890s, the novels of Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, Margaret Oliphant, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope illustrated how the suburban landscape and its garden were employed to convey personal characteristics to readers. But representations of the garden in these novels were also part of the armoury of social signifiers with which authors targeted the precise social status of both individual households and particular 'flavours' of suburb. The realist novels of John Galsworthy and George Gissing written in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods about suburban life during the 1880s, pin-point even more sharply the social status of particular gardens, and the function of these gardens as places for particular sets of social relations.

Building upon this 'factual' and 'fictional' evidence, the final sections of Chapter Three return to the area about Camberwell, the suburb of Dr. Lettsom's Grove Hill Villa. They introduce accounts of garden experience there supplied by natural historians, social commentators, and autobiographers. These include Richard Jefferies' field-notes, Charles Booth's notes on poverty in his *Life and Labour of the People in London*, and guides to the suburbs made in the last years of the century; we also look at diaries of middle-class men and women, reminiscences about the area, and some autobiographical 'suburban' novels. These witnesses travelled further into the cluster of suburbs beyond Camberwell, Grove Park and Dulwich, to Norwood and Surbiton, Surrey, from where, finally, we visit the 'outer-suburban' gardens of Chatham, Kent, and Epping Forest, Essex.

By using a combination of didactic, fictional, remembered, and analytic sources, I suggest how the form, function and fantasy of a garden can be reconstructed imaginatively. I show that by gaining a sense of the garden's position within the suburban landscape we can also gauge the garden's cultural importance within both 'public' and 'private' spheres of life in the nineteenth century. Altogether the sources begin to define the physical and imagined space of the nineteenth-century suburban garden and its role in contemporary culture more widely. Piecing together evidence in this way helps keep a critical balance between proselytism and actual practice within

contemporary gardening culture. This is the path taken through the suburbs and their gardens in the rest of the thesis.

3.1. Horticultural Periodicals and other Networks Connecting Suburban Gardeners.

Reviewing the previous sixty years of gardening books in 1860, the anonymous author of *The Garden that Paid the Rent* concluded only that,

> Cobbett was a household name; Loudon was well-thumbed; and Paxton was consulted on all occasions.[3]

Four years later the *Floral World* protested that

> Shall we not say, too, that gardening periodicals have done much to foster the germ of pure taste?[4]

Horticultural books had been steadily multiplying from the sixteenth century, with perhaps twice as many being published in the first half of the nineteenth century as all the rest put together. Apart from the growth of this body of literature, two main shifts occurred within the horticultural publishing industry: in the first place, publishers began to appeal directly to middle-class suburban audiences and, secondly, they recognised the potential of the periodical gardening magazine. The encyclopaedia, dictionary, and calendar forms of gardening book had been established during the eighteenth century and these provided the model for much of the most popular gardening literature published in the next. As far as London's domestic gardens were concerned, the most comprehensive standard works before our period were Thomas Fairchild's *The City Gardener* (1722), Philip Miller's *The Gardeners Dictionary* (1731), followed, perhaps, by John Abercrombie's *Every Man His Own Gardener* (1767) and *The Gardeners Assistant* (1786), all of which went into several editions. Until the publication of John Claudius Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822) these books had best served the middle-classes of amateur gardener, working a modest,

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[3]Anon., *The Garden that Paid the Rent*, (Chapman & Hall, 1860), p. 3.

[4]*Floral World*, 7 (8), 1864, 177.

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more or less suburban, plot.[5] Loudon's *Encyclopaedia* was a cheaper and more up-to-date version of Miller's *Dictionary*. It was also, importantly, directed to the new class of villa owner living on the fringes of towns. The encyclopaedia format set the tone for the next three decades and remained an essential part of the garden manual even when the literature had moved towards a less formal, anecdotal style of writing in the second half of the century. Many of these dictionaries were little more than annotated lists cobbled together from existing manuscripts, or periodically published calendars which appeared with or without illustrations. They were cheap, informative and usually extremely comprehensive. What they weren't was attractive. Manuals of such a relentlessly technical nature were hardly calculated to attract and inspire the novice amateur, a fact which writers and publishers rapidly perceived. Thus, although there existed by the early 1820s several books in the mould of Richard Morris' *Flora Conspicua* (1820), which seemed 'to include figures of all such plants as are handsome subjects for a fine plate, without regard to their novelty or importance otherwise',[6] the majority were small volumes such as William Cobbett's unillustrated hand-book for the novice, *The English Gardener* (1829) or John Lindley and Joseph Paxton's 'instant resource', *A Pocket Botanical Dictionary* (1840). *The Gardener's Magazine* reviewed 'Paxton's Pocket Dictionary' (which covered 'the Names, History, and Culture of all Plants known in Britain, with a full explanation of technical terms') and concluded that although 'the possessor or cultivator of plants may perambulate his own garden, visit those of his friends or public establishments, and attend floricultural exhibitions', 'with this in his pocket', 'the type, notwithstanding its clearness, is somewhat too small for *our* eyes.'[7] What was needed was a form of gardening literature which catered to the many people who found themselves between these extremes. By the 1840s, a steady

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[5]Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, 'Gardening and the Middle Classes 1700-1830', in Mireille Galinou (ed.), *London's Pride, the Glorious History of the Capital's Gardens*, (Anaya Publishers with the Museum of London, 1990), pp. 124-125; Richard Bisgrove, *The National Trust Book of the English Garden*, (1990; Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 145-146.

[6]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 1, 1826, 61.

[7]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 6 (new series), 1840, 557.

stream of new gardening books, dedicated to the 'villa gardener', the 'town gardener', the 'suburban gardener', and the 'amateur gardener', was appearing in a format at once aesthetically-pleasing and convenient. These titles showed how the whole range of middle-class gardens, from the inner-suburban back garden to the rolling acres of suburban Home Counties retreats, could be cultivated by readers themselves or by hired horticultural staff.

The other distinctive feature of the new century of gardening literature was the appearance of the magazine. The magazine was not only perfectly formulated to the periodical calendar style of garden writing, it also enabled more people than ever to purchase works on practical or amateur gardening by instalments. The *Gardener's Magazine* (1826-1843) was founded and edited by the author of the *Encyclopaedia*, John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843), who, with his wife Jane Webb Loudon (1807-1858), was responsible for revolutionising the horticultural publishing industry in the first half of the nineteenth century. The *Magazine* occupied the middle ground between the luxury albums for armchair gardeners and dull little text-books for dedicated enthusiasts. It balanced text with image and was moderate in size and price. However, although they were dense with technical engravings and small print, single issues of the *Gardener's Magazine* were materially insubstantial. But when collated into annual volumes, they became unwieldy; with their large amount of assumed knowledge, this series was still designed for consulting in the library rather than in the field. The only volume of the *Ladies' Magazine of Gardening* (1841), on the other hand, was a slim, pocket sized volume, illustrated in colour, and bound in crimson and gold calf. It was at once a universally practical garden guide and a deliciously tactile object of desire. After his death in 1843, Jane Loudon continued to reissue her husband's work in single volumes for the benefit of the 'Suburban Gardener'. Future magazines, like those edited by Shirley Hibberd, would also increasingly adopt this format: by the 1850s the successful model of the amateur gardening magazine was elegant, informative, and practical, even in its annually-bound form. An additional advantage of periodically publishing garden articles was that it allowed the editor and his readership to keep

abreast of the seemingly infinite introductions of new technology in the fields of botany, horticultural engineering, pest control, and hybridisation. On a more entertaining level, serial publications were perfectly formulated to advertise and review not only the many horticultural exhibitions and flower-shows then touring the country but the displays of seasonally flowering and fruiting plants at botanical gardens and commercial nurserymen's showrooms. Information was also regularly published on 'plant finders' exploits abroad. To come full circle, many of these magazine articles were subsequently collated into books of complete gardening instruction.

The Germination of the Horticultural Periodical, 1787-1826.

The first true magazine in the field, *The Botanical Magazine, or, Flower Garden Displayed* (subtitled 'in which the most ornamental foreign plants, cultivated in the open ground, in the greenhouse and the stove, are accurately represented in their natural colours'), began life as the elaborate catalogue of a commercial grower. William Curtis (1746-1799) of the Botanic Garden, Lambeth Marsh, edited the *Botanical Magazine* from 1787, at which time it cost 1*s*. Devoting the periodical to ornamental 'exotic' species was a belatedly astute venture on Curtis's part, for it was preceded by a financially unsuccessful attempt to catalogue with illustrations the native flora of London and its environs. *Flora Londinensis*, published in two volumes during 1777, did not appeal to the growing class of wealthy amateurs who desired the rarer, more costly exotics for their gardens; and it was too expensive a work for those gardeners who continued to enjoy the sorts of wild plants which could be had for a few pence, or for free. The price of exotics soon fell however, and by the 1830s Loudon could suggest that 'no residence in the modern style can have a claim to be considered as laid out in good taste, in which all the trees and shrubs are not either foreign ones, or improved varieties of indigenous ones.'[8] William Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* continued, though in constantly altered guise under different editorships, until at least

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[8]Quoted in Helen Long, *The Edwardian House*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 42.

1922 when its copyright was secured by the Royal Horticultural Society. Like several other gardeners discussed in this thesis, Curtis's success was due in part to the network of wealthy fellow Quakers who financed and supported his various projects. Two relationships would prove particularly fruitful, however. The first was the marriage of his cousin Mary Curtis to James Maddock the younger (1763-1825), successor to his father's Walworth Nursery, 'well known to the curious in flowers throughout the kingdom', and located on the Surrey side of the river between Curtis's Botanic Garden, Lambeth Marsh and Camberwell Green.[9] The second was his friendship with the surgeon and gardening resident of Camberwell Grove: the Dr. Lettsom discussed in Chapter One.[10] However it was achieved, the success of Curtis's *Magazine* was catalytic and other periodicals specialising in horticultural botany soon followed. The *Botanist's Repository* was first issued in 1797 but continued for only ten volumes.[11] After the founding of the Horticultural Society of London, however, the character of the horticultural periodical was to alter irrevocably. This society, founded in 1804, above Hatchard's book-shop, Piccadilly, was the result of a meeting between William Aiton (of Kew Gardens), Sir Joseph Banks, William Forsyth (gardener to George III at Kensington), the Rt. Hon. Charles Greville (collector and 'connoisseur' of Paddington Green), Thomas Andrew Knight (amateur gardener and pomologist), John Wedgwood (banker, amateur gardener and youngest son of Josiah) and two other botanists-cum-nurserymen, Richard Anthony Salisbury (of Mill Hill)[12] and James Dickson (proprietor

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[9]John Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, (London and Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1974), p. 129.

[10]The Camberwell and Walworth districts were enclaves of Protestant Nonconformity from at least 1694, and continued to absorb Dissenters from all over Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as places of worship like Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle bear witness. Camberwell itself had a strong German presence between 1815 and 1914, absorbing this country's as well as French Napoleonic refugees. See Tony Wilson, 'German Camberwell', *Camberwell Quarterly*, 123 (April), 1999, 12.

[11]This, too, was a trade concern and so should not be considered in the same light as Loudon's independent publication.

[12]Dickson bought Mill Hill, Middlesex, in 1797. It had once belonged to the Quaker botanist, Peter Collinson. See note 13 below.

of Brompton Park Nursery). In spite of the diverse backgrounds and experience of its founders, the Society published its *Transactions* only between 1807 and 1848, at which time it was forced to cease publication due to financial difficulties. The smaller *Journal*, founded in 1846, remained in its stead until it, too, was stopped from necessity in 1855. Other societies and nurseries were not deterred, however, and in quick succession were issued the *Memoirs of the Caledonian Horticultural Society* (1813-1829) and *The Botanical Register* (1815-1847).

The other comparable document was *The Botanical Cabinet* which, like the similarly titled *Botanical Magazine* and *Botanist's Repository*, was essentially, an illustrated catalogue, in this case for Loddiges Nursery, to the north-east of London. The *Botanical Cabinet* ran from 1817 to 1834 and concluded after twenty volumes of illustrated plant lists with a complete index. About 1771, a German émigré, Conrad Loddiges (1743-1826), had acquired the nursery at Paradise Fields from fellow expatriate, John Busch.[13] The nursery, off Wells Street, was then situated in the heart of the Dissenting community at Stoke Newington. This eighteenth-century village suburb was, like Camberwell, a stronghold of Protestant Nonconformity. Although no longer a necessity, these networks of family and Friends could greatly assist the conduct of business in London, across the country, and overseas. By 1786, Conrad Loddiges had moved to a larger site at Mare Street, in neighbouring Hackney. In 1814, the nursery became Loddiges & Sons and continued under that name when George Loddiges (1784-1846), also responsible for the *Botanical Cabinet*, took over the business on his father's death. The nursery was known for its American plants, sent by the Quaker William Bartram, who, like his father John, was dealing in plants from Pennsylvania. In 1818, the firm grew over 1,200 trees and shrubs arranged

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[13]Peter Collinson (1694-1768) supplied John Busch with seeds. Collinson had developed a garden in Peckham specialising in American specimens before removing to Mill Hill in 1749. He was a Friend of Dr. John Fothergill, financier to the Philadelphia Bartrams, and Friend to both William Curtis of Lambeth and Dr. Lettsom of Camberwell. See David Solman, *Loddiges of Hackney, 'The Largest Hothouse in the World'*, (Hackney Society, 1997), pp. 9-10; Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, (1960; Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 224, 269.

alphabetically in a seven-acre collection along a spiralling walk.[14] Loudon, as we shall see, rated Loddiges as one of the best nurseries in London. Three years later, Loddiges was one of the first nurseries to grow orchids on a commercial scale. The period between 1826 and the late 1840s was the most successful in both the magazine and the nursery's history, the latter being 'outstandingly important for its introductions of hothouse exotics.'[15] In 1852, however, the nursery was forced to sell much of its larger stock because of financial difficulties; the mature trees and palms were bought at auction by Sir Joseph Paxton for the reincarnation of the Crystal Palace on Anerley Hill, Sydenham Heights, in 1854. But in spite of these measures Loddiges closed in 1860 due to mixture of poor administration, an approaching termination of the lease, and worsening air quality in the area. This was a pattern repeated in other nurseries across the capital, as we shall see. Nevertheless, Hackney and Stoke Newington were renowned for both nursery and private gardens, until at least the 1860s. Loudon's obituary of William Ross, a fellow Scot, Presbyterian, and 'respectable nurseryman at Stoke Newington', indicated to readers of the *Gardener's Magazine* the extent to which the area was associated with ornamental gardening.

> The taste of Mr. Ross for small ponds and artificial rock-work was at one time such, that he got apparatus for boring for water, and intended to turn his skill in this way to account [...] He was frequently applied to fit up little *Jets d'eau*, and ornament them with shells, flints, and rock-work, and various specimens of his skill in this way may be seen in the flower-gardens of Stoke Newington. A sudden illness, however, put a stop to his progress as a well-sinker; but he lived several years afterwards to enjoy his garden, and the comfort and solace of his two well-educated daughters, fond of the same pursuits as himself.[16]

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[14]Richard Bisgrove, *The National Trust Book of the English Garden*, (1990; Penguin Books, 1992), p. 158.

[15]John Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, (London and Chichester: Phillimore & Co., Ltd., 1974), p. 89. Solman, *Loddiges of Hackney*, 1996, pp. 67-68. Loddiges' Camellia House was designed using Loudon's 'curvilinear system' of conservatory construction between 1819 and 1822; Paxton designed another of Loddiges' glasshouses around 1830.

[16]*Gardener's Magazine*, 1 (1), 1826, 95-96.

John Ross succeeded to his father's 'Caledonian Nursery', known to be operating from at least 1786, and ran it from the same site in Newington Road until 1837.[17] Like James Maddock and the Rosses' nurseries, Loddiges continued to rely upon Dissenting friends and family to provide both capital and skilled labour during the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Situated near to the first unconsecrated cemetery in London, at Abney Park, Stoke Newington, Loddiges was well-placed to undertake the extensive landscaping which Loudon was advocating for the new cemetery grounds.[18] Both men employed Nonconformist friends and family as illustrators for their magazines. In 1864, in a review of the autumn flower-shows in and around London, Shirley Hibberd, another Quaker gardener, singled out his friend Mr. Forsyth's show-house for particular commendation: 'all the while he had a grand display in his show-house at home which filled Stoke Newington with delight, making a sensation in a district where the chrysanthemum has gained its principal renown.'[19] Other nurserymen in Stoke Newington and Hackney were also predominantly of Nonconformist stock, continuing the close ties which agriculture, horticulture and other plant-associated sciences like medicine and pharmacology had traditionally shared with Quaker industry.[20] Their forays into advertising, the periodical publication of illustrated lists of the plants available from the nursery, were germane to the birth of the horticultural periodical which reviewed, yet was nominally independent of, the trade.

John Claudius Loudon and the Growth of the *Gardener's Magazine*, 1826-1843.

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[17]Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 1974, p. 198. Ross' Nursery was included in the list of nursery gardeners 'In the Vicinity of LONDON, and within eight or ten miles thereof', given in John Abercrombie's *The Gardener's Daily Assistant*, (John Fielding, 1786).

[18]See John Claudius Loudon, *On the Laying Out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries*, (1845).

[19]*Floral World*, 8 (1), 1865, 1.

[20]For a discussion of the importance of Quaker networks to the development of horticulture in Britain and North America between 1720 and 1780, see Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, 1985, pp. 224-228, 285; and James Walvin, *The Quakers*, (John Murray, 1997), pp. 118, 119.

The first financially successful horticultural periodical appeared in 1826. Subtitled a 'Register of Rural and Domestic Improvement', *The Gardener's Magazine* did, in fact, cover a vast array of topical subject matter alongside gardening, thereby ensuring as wide an audience as possible. Published by subscription like the *Encyclopaedia*, the *Magazine* initially appeared thrice yearly but was soon well enough established in the market-place to be issued monthly. It was highly successful and continued until Loudon's death. Although there were numerous contributors of regular articles and letters, the *Magazine* remained in essence the mouthpiece of the highly vociferous Mr. Loudon, assisted by his wife, Mrs. Loudon.

Travelling across Europe as well as up and down the British Isles, the Loudons viewed the private gardens of a broad section of polite society, the grounds of nurserymen, botanic gardens, and the conditions of the rural poor. Their impressions were then transmitted to the public through the *Magazine*, with the primary purpose of drawing attention to the state of British husbandry combined with a recipe for urgently needed improvements. Much of this journalism took the form of a comparison between foreign, particularly French, custom and practice and that in Britain, especially in the earlier editions when the Wars were still in mind. Loudon's comments on the variety of landscapes he saw within Britain, meanwhile, were usually orientated around the notion of what was deemed appropriate to the particular station of its owner. As with all publications concerned with aspects of domestic management, taste was a manifold preoccupation. Poor or inappropriate taste shown in landscape improvement and garden management was, however, better than no improvement at all. Loudon's regular 'Calls at Suburban Gardens' for the *Gardener's Magazine* made this abundantly clear. On visiting 'a small villa near Tooting', a South London suburb, for instance, he noted how 'a gravel walk round five or six acres of grass was conducted in that formal serpentine manner that is seldom seen except in the town gardens of the lowest class.' While he 'could not approve of the taste displayed, [he] highly applauded the substantial and neat manner in which everything was executed, apparently without

limitation of expense.'[21] Loudon abhorred 'unmade' ground, especially near the home, he preferred any variety of gardening to none at all.

It seems that all his life Loudon was haunted by the barren, scorched and bloody landscapes he witnessed in France and Russia at the height of the Napoleonic Wars. The wars not only affected him visually. Loudon returned to Britain in 1814 to find that his investments had failed in the ensuing depression.[22] The landscape design which he went on to develop - called Gardenesque, to distance himself from Picturesque and other landscape theories - was the antithesis of the battlefield. He eschewed the sorts of landscape where the human hand was not everywhere in evidence. His gardens were tidy, proud of their individual contents, displaying the newly imported specimen trees and shrubs to advantage, and contained discrete spaces or 'rooms' for different aspects of the garden. They were, in short, homely and domestic. Although the *Gardener's Magazine* was not without precedent, it was the first periodical explicitly to equate gardening with domesticity. Loudon cast his horticultural net widely, other gardening magazines were narrower in their focus.

Loudon considered Loddiges Nursery, and several other privately owned nurseries around London, to rival all others in Britain and the world. He was studiously unimpressed with the majority of grounds under royal patronage but reserved his highest contempt for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 'where the system followed is of a Dutch Tulip fancier who would rather destroy than give away'.[23] It was fundamentally inimical to the idea of free trade because of its secretive practices, restricted access and illiberal attitude to plant distribution. Loudon believed that the practice continued, even after an enquiry on behalf of the state (undertaken by Loudon, John Lindley and Paxton) had secured the transference of responsibility for the gardens from Crown to Government, in 1841.[24] The gardens of the Horticultural Society of

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[21] *Gardener's Magazine*, 3, 1828, 362.

[22] Miles Hadfield, *Pioneers in Gardening*, (1955; Bloomsbury, 1998), p. 141.

[23] *Gardener's Magazine*, 2, 1827, 313-314.

[24] Ray Desmond, *Kew: the History of the Royal Botanic Gardens*, (Harville Press, 1995), p. 366.

London at Chiswick received similarly embittered criticism. Without free horticultural trade, reckoned Loudon, there was no competition. Other prominent gardeners, including Paxton, also championed competition as the means of improving the middling-class gardens in the peripheries of towns and cities. Easy access to inexpensive and healthy plants by these classes would, they believed, lead to the improvement of the country at large: the middle classes would set the standard in modern gardening taste, and lead, by example. The subject of the middle class as leaders in gardening taste and suburban improvement more widely is discussed in the last part of Chapter Four.

Although Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* might seem to have shared much in common with the papers issued by the Horticultural Society, it was in fact, far closer in spirit to the commercial publications of nurserymen. Not only was much of the material of similar nature - attractive and inclusive - both reached a comparably large audience. Loudon dismissed the *Transactions* and *Memoirs* type periodical of the horticultural societies as 'costly quarto[s] for the rich'.[25] Moreover, Loudon used the *Magazine* as a vehicle for lambasting the Society, and in particular its president (between 1813 and 1838), Thomas Andrew Knight. One of Loudon's chief missions (initially opposed by Knight) was the proper education of gardeners. Loudon's campaign for boys entering the profession to be instructed in mathematics, geometry, botany, geology, Latin and other subjects not normally deemed necessary for the labouring classes, gained further impetus in the 1830s during the agricultural slump. Many nurseries were bankrupted, their plant collections auctioned, and gardeners dismissed: a comprehensive education such as that outlined in the *Gardener's Magazine* would equip the redundant gardener to seek alternative employment: perhaps even in the world of journalism. Nurseries, garden-libraries and the horticultural periodical also functioned as labour exchanges.

If the format and subject matter of the *Gardener's Magazine* encouraged a wide readership, other factors were also influential in its success, as they were in the success

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[25]*Gardener's Magazine*, 1 (new series), 1834, 97.

of the gardening magazine *per se*. By the 1830s it had become an established typology, catering to the full range of gardening practices - from window-box to country estate. Although these publications continued to address the professional gardener, the extent to which they began to instruct the amateur was notable. By the 1840s, the amount that could be achieved by the amateur lady or gentleman gardener, aided only in the course of the heaviest labour, was repeatedly stressed in gardening books and periodicals. Books and magazines continued to rise in popularity and, as they met with new demands, were transformed accordingly. Increased readership was due in the main to the expanded middle or commercial classes with increased opportunities for leisure, a group that Loudon had early recognised as requiring assistance in the management of its 'suburban' or 'villa' gardens. The number of gardening books written by and for 'gentlewomen' correspondingly rose through our period. The great strides made in mass literacy during the nineteenth century, initially for middle-class women and girls and, in the latter third, with the introduction of Board Schools and other agents of formal education, the poorer classes of both sexes, undoubtedly contributed to the increased readership of all magazines.[26] Indeed, 'the periodical has at particular moments been understood as a feminine or feminised form.'[27] The number of subscription, professional and lending libraries likewise increased, while advances in print technology improved the quality and reduced the cost of reproducing text and illustration; the greater numbers published by popular demand led to further economies of scale.

It has been difficult to establish the distribution and availability of gardening magazines in any precise sense; publishers' own figures for sales, even when they were indicated, are not a reliable source. We can only guess at the ratio of purchasers to readers, except that 'it was even higher than it is today',[28] because we have as little idea of where they were sold, how they were bought and by whom, where they were

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[26]Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 118-120.

[27]Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine 1800-1914*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 9.

[28]Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own*, 1996, p. 8.

read and by whom, and where - and if - they were stored. We know, however, that both the London Horticultural and the Royal Botanic Societies' libraries held copies of the main titles. It is also probable that the larger provincial societies would have stocked copies of the better-known titles for consultation by their members. Loudon certainly recommended they did so and wrote at length on the establishment and recommended contents of both professional and amateur subscription garden libraries. In recognition of their work, Loudon awarded copies of the *Gardener's Magazine* and globes to societies whose practice he particularly esteemed. Whether book-shops or print-shops stocked gardening, or other magazines is uncertain; nor is it known whether collated volumes were within the remit of the free libraries' collections. It seems probable that the larger nurserymen's showrooms would have held copies, if only because their names featured prominently in plant lists, their establishments in reviews; many nurserymen also contributed articles and reviews of their own. Nursery and seedsmen were also, of course, among the largest purchasers of advertising space. Whether gardening magazines other than their own catalogues were available for public perusal is not known.

Some twenty magazines devoted to related issues appeared between the 1830s and the death of Loudon and his *Gardener's Magazine* in 1843. Few, however, remained in publication beyond ten years, with the exception of *The Floricultural Cabinet* and *Paxton's Magazine of Botany*; hence only the fittest survived. Despite its scientific name, *Paxton's Magazine* (1834-1849) was essentially a popular horticultural journal. Paxton also established and edited the professional gardener's weekly, *The Gardener's Chronicle*, in 1841 with John Lindley, Professor of Botany at the University of London. It was co-owned by the editor of *Punch*. The *Floricultural Cabinet* is also notable because its longevity was in part due to its ability to change. In its first form it lasted until 1859 and was then continued as *Gardener's Weekly* between 1860 and 1865. After this date it assumed the name and style of the *Gardener's Magazine*, edited initially by the popular writer Shirley Hibberd, until, like many publications, it ceased business during the First World War. The attention paid to the

domestic space cultivated by this section of the middle classes in household manuals and gardening guides published between the late-eighteenth century and the 1840s, suggests that this was precisely the audience identified by publishers as being in need of guidance. Here was a growing class of men, women and children, devoted to family life and domestic comfort and with a correspondingly increasing lack of confidence in achieving a tasteful and 'correct' presentation of their home and garden. Writers and publishers were soon at hand to assuage, or exploit, the social vulnerability of this aesthetically naive but economically confident grouping and supplied limitless advice to this end.

As the number of people describing themselves as belonging to the middle classes increased so too did the diversity of incomes and aspirations encompassed by that ambiguous term. By mid-century, the lower-middle classes presented a growing market for less-expensive consumer goods, including items for floriculture. Domestic and horticultural manuals like those published by the Loudons and Shirley Hibberd, catered increasingly to specific sections of the domestically-minded, and assumed the income which supported the lifestyle it represented. Others, like those published by Beeton were anxious to note the diversity of the spaces gardened even by those of similar social and geographic status. *Beeton's Shilling Gardening*, published in the 1880s, addressed itself to the 'arrangement of cottage and villa gardens', noting that

> Gardens of villa residences in the suburbs of towns and cottages in the country vary in size, shape, position, and aspect: some are square, some - perhaps the greatest number - oblong, and others irregular in form, ranging in size from a couple of rods, or about 60 square yards, to a quarter of an acre, or about 1,200 square yards.[29]

Concentrating upon the 'house and flower garden,' the writer asserted that 'we will take as our typical garden a rectangular piece of ground measuring about 40 yards one way, and 20 the other, this being the form that generally prevails in estates parcelled out in lots as building ground.'[30] This was quoted almost verbatim from another Beeton gardening book, the larger and more liberally illustrated *Beeton Book of Garden*

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[29]*Beeton's Shilling Gardening*, (Ward, Lock & Co., c.1880), p. 3.

[30]*Beeton's Shilling Gardening*, 1880, p. 4.

Management (1862).[31] This book cited 'another typical garden which Mr. Loudon [...] describes and figures in his "Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture"' of 1836.[32] Even where we have precise information about the shape and size of the 'typical garden' cultivated by one or other class, then, the common practice of recycling text means that it cannot accurately be ascribed to a particular period of house building.[33] What these publisher's details do suggest, however, is the size of plot belonging to its primary audience, many of whom were not the occupants of new houses and so had to adapt or accept an unfashionably designed or simply bedraggled garden. *Beeton's Book of Garden Management* addressed directly the horticultural difficulties of the 'majority' in a chapter called 'old gardens and their renewal'. These ranged from those of centuries-old cultivation to 'the gardens of later times, especially those attached to houses recently built in the suburbs of our great towns and cities,' where 'the work of renewal will be that of reformation'.[34] Because, 'after all,

> it is not every one that can enjoy the pleasure of laying out his own garden and moulding it to his pleasure as he will, for the majority in this country, whether owners or occupiers have to take to gardens secondhand which have been made, and perhaps marred, by others, and which in nine times out of ten in all probability must be adapted and manipulated in order to render them what they might be or what they ought to be.[35]

The main publication which paid attention to the renewal of gardens was the *Floral World* which understood that 'somebody must be located on the ill-placed lots' of suburban development and contained long essays on their adaptation.[36] This offered extensive advice for the planning and planting of a garden even smaller than those

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[31]*The Beeton Book of Garden Management*, (1862; facsimile edn., Hertford: Omega Books, 1985), p. 97.

[32]*Beeton Book of Garden Management*, (1862), p. 91.

[33]*Beeton Book of Garden Management* contains images from a number of sources, including a great many reproduced from Hibberd's *Rustic Adornments*, of 1856. *Rustic Adornments* was advertised by *Amateur Gardening*, (published at the same address), as late as 1905, see *Amateur Gardening*, November 18th 1905, 442.

[34]*Beeton Book of Garden Management*, (1862), pp. 181-2.

[35]*Ibid.*, p. 181

[36]*Floral World*, 1 (1), January 1858, 19.

defined by Loudon and the Beeton guides. Figs. 3.16-3.19 show plans for suburban, villa, and cottage gardens dating from 1831, through 1880 to 1912.

Shirley Hibberd's Cultivation of the Popular Horticultural Title, 1855-1880.

Although the publications discussed above attempted to reach a broad audience of amateurs and professionals, the first magazine to cater exclusively for the lower-middling class of amateur gardener did not appear until 1856. This was *Gossip for the Garden* and its subtitle, a 'Handbook for the Florist and Suburban Horticulturist', indicated its intended readership of lower middle-class amateur growers of plants for ornament and exhibition. It was edited by two specialist flower growers - or florists - one of them based in Derby and the other in London, for which reason its content was not so biased towards metropolitan events as other publications; so-called florists' flowers were particularly associated with northern and midland manufacturing towns.[37] *Gossip for the Garden* folded in 1863, partly owing to these divided geographies. Although its contents were not dissimilar to *Gossip for the Garden, The Floral World and Garden Guide* was a more carefully conceived and slightly more up-market publication, instructing amateur town and suburban villa gardeners. This was edited by the one-time contributor to *Gossip for the Garden*, the London gardener and journalist, Shirley Hibberd. Published monthly between 1858 and 1875, the *Floral World* achieved a circulation hitherto unmatched by any gardening paper.[38] Moreover, it was specifically written for London suburban gardeners, and used its authors' considerable knowledge of local geographical and environmental conditions, a more general awareness of the availability of horticultural requisites and, importantly, London's peculiar leaseholding laws and the rights of the tenant at home in his garden.

Born in Stepney in 1825, Hibberd became a gardener, only branching into horticultural journalism in his thirties. Although this son of a Quaker printer styled

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[37]See, for example, Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, pp. 262-267.

[38]Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, p. 342.

himself 'amateur', his writing and gardening careers spanned his latter thirty-five years. During this time he wrote eight books and edited some four journals as well as writing for the mainstream press, sitting upon numerous horticultural panels and practising as a landscape gardener. He kept a nursery, and undertook commissions such as the public garden on Islington Green, in the 1870s. Hibberd died, appropriately, at Kew in 1890, where he had been working nearby at the Royal Horticultural Society's trial grounds at Chiswick. His body was taken home by funeral cortege to Abney Park Cemetery, for burial there beside his wife, Sarah. Despite a string of successful titles, beginning with *The Town Garden* (1855), priced 3*s*. 6*d*., he is best remembered for his book *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste* (1856). Like the Loudons, Hibberd published quantities of literature for improving the inside and outside of homes. From the 1870s onwards, periodical and other works directing their attentions to the amateur gardener without the means to employ regular labour outside the home became increasingly common; the most successful of all being probably the inexpensive weekly, *Amateur Gardening* , begun in 1884 and edited, initially, by Hibberd.[39]

The horticultural periodical also increasingly operated as a means of communication *between* amateurs rather than purely as a means of channelling information from professional to amateur. Despite suffering from the inevitably heavy hand of The Editor, letters published in the Notes & Queries sections of the press are useful historical sources because they bring together like-minded individuals. In the *Floral World* these columns became virtual gardening clubs through which members of the gardening public exchanged advice, ideas and seeds. From 1904 *Amateur Gardening* ran a weekly 'our gardens' competition judged from amateurs' photographs of their own plots. In submitting their photographs, competitors resigned copyright to the magazine, which was subsequently illustrated with quantities of 'real gardens'. This was not only a cheap method of producing the magazine, the practice also encouraged a feeling that the magazine belonged to amateur gardeners, themselves.

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[39]This publication continues to address the lower end of the market and at £1.10 is still the cheapest national weekly available.

Although attempts at inclusivity were not new, (the *Floral World* had been cultivating its own circle of gardeners since the 1850s), the late nineteenth-century introduction of cheap reproduction photography would transform the newspaper and magazine trade.

The first edition of the *Floral World* proclaimed its object as 'bind[ing] together a rather large circle of gardening amateurs, who hitherto have had no literary system of centralization'.[40] 'Our fraternity of jolly gardeners,' it continued, 'want [sic] to communicate to others of kindred spirit, scraps of original knowledge [...] or the rendering cheap and come-at-able things that have hitherto been beyond the reach of folks not blessed with fortunes.'[41] The *Floral World* located its readership on the 'skirts' of London not only for its common sense of social and economic geography; it also identified shared physical traits, particularly climate and pollution, with which its otherwise scattered readers would identify. 'We write for a London climate,' it announced, 'and our directions are based on the general practice of gardening in and about Middlesex, Surrey and Hertfordshire.'[42] By 1862 the *Floral World* could remark that

> You now see in the fore-courts of all the respectable villas [in and around London] plenty of evergreen shrubs [...] coniferous trees, such as Araucarias [monkey-puzzles], cedrus deodar [deodar cedar], specimens of yews, junipers, and others that have been recommended in these pages as *well adapted for town soils and their atmospheres*.[43]

There was a regular feature called 'Suburban Gardens' which, like Loudon's 'Tours of Suburban Gardens', commented upon the state of such gardens as it found them. The *Floral World*'s readers were, on the whole, less experienced gardeners than those of Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine*, and its letters reflected the need for even the most basic of horticultural advice; a large number of Loudon's correspondents were professionals. While the editorial responses to these letters, penned by Hibberd, were often bluntly dismissive, he continued to identify personally with this readership in

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[40]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858, 1.

[41]*Ibid*, 2.

[42]*Floral World*, 1 (4), 1858, 90; and *Floral World*, 6 (3), 1863, 85.

[43]*Floral World*, 5 (9), 1862, 185. Emphasis mine.

terms of personal circumstance ('poor journalist'[44]), transient home-making and size of plot. The other criterion for joining 'the fraternity of jolly gardeners' was the proximity of one's home and garden to the city. Both Hibberd and his readers measured this proximity by the number of miles which joined and separated them from the metropolis. Gardeners in Middlesex, north of the river, identified their 'metropolis' in a number of physical and sensory landmarks ranging from Whitehall, Charing Cross, Bow Bells, the Bank of England, and, most frequently, St. Paul's Cathedral. Hibberd prefaced the *Town Gardener* (1855) with the statement that 'once more my lot is cast within hearing of St. Paul's clock'.[45] On the Surrey side of the river, the metropolitan landmark from which suburban homes and gardens were measured was usually the neighbourhood of London Bridge, being at once densely populated, a major junction, and opposite the City:

> I live within two-and-a-half miles of London Bridge, (Peckham). I have had a large six-column wire rose temple with cupola, &c, sent me. What can I plant to make a show next Summer ?
> - Cockney.[46]

These reference points shared an ability to indicate the correspondent's profession, income, leisure-time, size of plot, domestic geography, and, importantly, the level of pollution in the neighbourhood, while retaining their personal anonymity. Alternatively, readers would sign themselves 'Suburban', 'Amateur', or, as above, 'Cockney', to indicate their status, gardening ability and location within the less precisely-defined suburban bands of Middlesex and Surrey. Finding plants which would tolerate the 'dust-bowl' and 'smoke-pit' of the inner suburbs was clearly important to readers, but they responded just as eagerly to the less predictable (but free), foreign seeds advertised by fellow readers returning from India and Australia. Some 'solicit[ed] the aid of readers [...] in the collection of seeds of trees and shrubs for transmission to Canterbury, New Zealand' to remind them of home. Others sent

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[44]Shirley Hibberd, *The Town Garden*, (Groombridge & Sons, 1855; preface to second 1859 edn.), p. x.

[45]Hibberd, *Town Garden*, 1855, preface to first edition, p. xiv.

[46]*Floral World*, 2 (1), 1859, 6.

plants to the *Floral World*'s offices with requests for identification. 'W. Clarke,' for example, was told that 'we cannot take the trouble to name the thirty-four mosses sent; somebody would send us a field or a forest next [...] it is quite out of the question.'[47] 'Wells', submitted a flower which 'came to hand quite crushed and mouldy, as might be expected of so fleshy a thing sent unprotected in a common envelope.'[48] Yet Jemima Wells, as she was later revealed, was not deterred, and Hibberd would soon refer to her, only half-jokingly, as 'our esteemed correspondent.'[49]

'Editing a horticultural periodical,' wrote Shirley Hibberd, 'is the best fun ever invented.' But, although pragmatic about its content and extent of influence, he acknowledged the serious and down-to-earth nature of his magazine: 'a periodical is only another kind of shop whereat there is something to be sold - say at the figure of fourpence - yet all the customers come with the smiles of friends.' Perhaps he had other, more highbrow, publications in mind, whose authors had pretensions to art and literature, when he wrote that 'this FLORAL WORLD is nothing more nor less than a commercial commodity.' Hibberd concluded by advertising the 'excellent vegetarian dishes we are about to provide for their intellectual digestion'.[50] In publicly refusing to take himself (a dietary vegetarian), or his magazine, too seriously, he was probably hinting that others, like his occasional contributor William Robinson, then of the Regent's Park Botanic Gardens, did in fact do so.

William Robinson's Editorial Empire, 1870-1914

A different tone pervaded several new gardening magazines published from the 1870s until the First World War. They were also different in content. These were definitely publications devoted to gardening rather than horticulture: they promoted gardening as a creative art form requiring taste and sensitivity. Horticulture, on the other hand, was presented as a mechanical science practised by professional gardeners,

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[47]*Floral World*, 2 (3), 1859, 71.

[48]*Floral World*, 1 (7), 1858, 168.

[49]*Floral World*, 6 (12), 1863, 261.

[50]*Ibid.*, 259.

whose outdated and overly-rigid ideas were unresponsive to the genius of the place. The main proponent of the new practice and theory was William Robinson (1839-1932) who had published two seminal books, *The Alpine Garden* and *The Wild Garden*, in 1870 and 1871, respectively. The same year he edited and published his first periodical, *The Garden*. In 1879 he began *Gardening*, later *Gardening Illustrated*, to cater specifically for the less affluent classes of country gardener as well as 'the new suburbians'.[51] Both *Gardening Illustrated* and *The Garden* survived the First World War.

Because members of what we can call the Robinsonian circle occupied a great deal of their time putting their thoughts into print the extent of their influence on the ground has, I think, been somewhat overestimated, for the same reason that turn-of-the-century figures like Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) dominate gardening biography. They were largely well-to-do, well-connected and frequently eccentric English men and women discussing and designing gardens with their peers. Jekyll, for instance, was acquainted with both Morris and Ruskin; it is probably no coincidence that her career has subsequently eclipsed that of her friend and colleague William Robinson. Robinson was a professionally trained gardener who advocated 'wild' or 'natural' gardening through a series of books and magazines calculated to draw public attention. These publications, the product of a successful journalistic career spanning some sixty years, ultimately allowed Robinson to purchase Gravetye Manor, a Tudor mansion in Sussex. Here he put theory into practice, producing the type of freely-planted old-fashioned, 'English' garden now more associated with Jekyll. Unlike his gardening style, Robinson's writing verged on the dictatorial. His posthumous obscurity, however, probably owes more to his humble origins in Ulster than his opinionated writing style. Other gardener-writers in this circle included Mrs. C. W. Earle (1836-1925) who confined her work to writing about her Surrey garden, 'Woodlands'. This garden was popularised through her wildly successful *Pot-Pourri from a Surrey*

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[51]Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, 1985, p. 362.

Garden (1896)[52] which, with its three sequels, was reputed to have earned her publishers some £30,000.[53] Like Shirley Hibberd's Stoke Newington garden, and Jekyll's 'Munstead Wood' in Surrey, 'Woodlands' became so well-known that the author begged her readers for privacy. Mrs. Earle and Miss Jekyll were both from distinguished military families, distant relatives, Surrey neighbours, friends, colleagues and fellow graduates of the South Kensington Schools of Design. They were also, like Miss Ellen Willmott and William Robinson, fellow patrons of Lady Frances Wolseley's Glynde School for Lady Gardeners, founded in 1900, in Sussex.[54]

In spite of the Robinsonian influence, the style of garden writing pioneered by Hibberd continued throughout this period, though both modified their tone when appealing to the other's reader. Jekyll and Robinson both wrote articles dedicated to the layout of ordinary suburban gardens, though these tended to come in the twentieth century. In the late 1920s and early '30s Jekyll contributed a regular column on precisely this subject in *Amateur Gardening*. Hibberd, who lived until 1890, made a valiant attempt to steer a path between the new old-English school of garden writing cultivated by Jekyll and Robinson (discussed in Chapter Seven), and the sorts of garden which this writing ceaselessly condemned. Although Hibberd and Robinson worked together in the 1860s, Hibberd's mediating stance was not borne of loyalty, nor even of a half-hearted attempt to modernise his now rather dated 'Victorian' style of writing and gardening. His attempt at a middle or third way was governed simply by loyalty to his own readers and, presumably, to his bank. These readers enjoyed the sorts of gardens which epitomised all that the new, old-English garden reviled; the reasons for which are discussed in Chapter Four. These gardens, were, in short, suburban.

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[52]Mrs. Earle, *Pot-Pourri from a Surrey Garden*, (Smith, Elder & Co., 1897).

[53]See Martin Hoyles, 'Bread and Roses', *Gardening Books from 1560-1960*, (2), 1996, p. 39; Kellaway, *Women Gardeners*, 1995, p. xi.

[54]Jane Brown, *Eminent Gardeners*, (Viking, 1990), p. 28.

Even before the 1870s, horticultural periodicals catering for the poorer classes of town and suburban gardener, like *Gossip for the Garden* (1856-1863), the *Floral World* (1858-1880), and *Amateur Gardening* (1884-to date), were suggesting the substitution of mundane plants where costly specimens were the preferred norm, but usually in the sorts of 'formal' arrangements normally reserved for exotic and bedding plants. 'Exotics' - imported tender or half-hardy plants requiring protection in temperate climates - and 'bedders' - small flowering plants, usually of exotic origin, cultivated seasonally in a system of floral patterning developed during the 1830s - were the cultural opposites of naturally reproducing hardy native species in the British, or English garden. From mid-century onwards this popular press also advocated the use of kitchen-garden plants on the mixed grounds of economy and 'simple' beauty. Robinson's books and magazines, however, tended to suggest that the garden as well as the individual plants should bear more resemblance to this 'cottage garden'. The so-called cottage garden was an amalgam of the sorts of gardens traditionally dug by the peasant cottager, the country parson and village squire. This hybrid garden provided the model for gardens written up by Arts and Crafts inspired gardener-journalists during the last third of the century. Thus, although gardening with 'old-fashioned' varieties never really died out in the period, a trickle of increasingly cheap magazines was contributing to the renaissance of the 'cottage garden' by advocating its easy mix of hardy perennials, wild flowers, and salad vegetables as the perfect recipe for all sorts of inexpensive gardens of beauty and simplicity. In advocating the revitalised cottage garden for the lower-middle classes of urban and suburban horticulturist as well as their rural equivalents, the predominantly upper-class school of new old-English garden writers appeared to be engineering a coherent landscape form in order to create the illusion of a cohesive lower class of society. If this was so, or if it was perceived to be so by the diverse groups which made up this lower class, it should not surprise us that the practice was not taken up whole-heartedly. Middling-class gardeners would not want to be mistaken for 'peasants'; nor would countryfolk wish to be associated with 'Cockney' attempts at gardening in the smoke-ridden fringes of town.

Although some contributed to the popular press, the Robinsonian group of well-to-do gardening friends, which also included Canon Ellacombe and Dean Samuel Reynolds Hole, Frances Jane Hope and Ellen Wilmott, was rarely specifically concerned with economical gardening, even though their methods of gardening with hardy perennials were allegedly cheaper than the 'bedding system' which they sought to replace. And, while they may have approved of the apparently socially levelling qualities of the cottage-gardening style (particularly its potential as an alternative to the 'upstart' gardens of the *nouveaux riches* - supposedly recalcitrant harbourers - if not harbingers - of bedding-out) they were happiest when confined to treating of gardens - usually their own extensive plots - in purely aesthetic terms. Nevertheless, as journalists writing for a wide range of books and periodicals, they could not fail to take account of the growing middle class of gardener, with a literature increasingly dedicated to his needs, income and leisure time, which was taking root in the suburban landscape between the enclaves in the Home Counties of Jekyll, Robinson *et al*, and their publishing houses in the city. Eventually this upper class of gardening writer was forced, or was canny enough, to modify and diversify its works accordingly. Books on gardening and household management published by the phenomenal Beeton empire from the 1860s on can only have sharpened their sense of upper-class idiosyncrasy, even as they looked down upon the mainstay of its audience, the lower- and middle-middle classes.

By the 1870s and '80s agricultural depression had forced many landowners to release acres of arable land for redevelopment; a series of poor harvests, on top of the glut of cheap cereal imports, exacerbated the situation. This had major repercussions for the more technical (and expensive) horticultural journals whose readership was made up of the professional gardener and his employer. As large staffs of gardeners became increasingly anachronistic in the domestic environment, professional, technical magazines either folded or redirected their efforts to attracting the burgeoning class of amateurs who dug for pleasure rather than profit; only the *Gardener's Chronicle* survived the changes. Landed families' estates were running down, drawing increased

rents from property, or selling up completely.[55] Until 1885, landowners still formed an absolute majority in Parliament. After this time, tenant farmers began to acquire freeholds.[56] Here was another market for gardening magazines: those who were technically skilled, but had moved up the ranks and wanted a garden in keeping with their new status. By 1900, the 'new rich' were purchasing 'estates' of less than 150 acres and commuting, like other suburban gardeners, to their City offices.[57] This wealthy class of gardening amateur also required its own magazine to assist in 'week-end' and other leisured gardening. Ironically, the very titles established in response to the 'breaking up' of the countryside by 'outsiders', would prove the most appealing to them: *Country Life*, founded in 1897 (and later from the same publisher as *Amateur Gardening*), taught the new country gardeners how to live in their alien environments. Robinson's thriving *Gardening Illustrated*, as well the unsuccessful *Flora and Sylva* (1903-1905), also catered for this new market. By the end of our period, the housing estates which more and more reached into the countryside, accused of encroaching upon noble estates themselves, introduced a new set of inhabitants, who gardened with little or no practical help and still less income, to the pleasures of managing their own piece of the country.

Loudon had introduced his *Gardener's Magazine* by declaring that horticulture was an art of peacetime which could not thrive under conditions of war, a comment meant as much in spiritual as economic terms. This was a recurring theme in British gardening literature and was often employed to explain the nation's love of gardens historically. Any comments recounting the ineluctable ties between progressive horticulture, the national gardening style, and peacetime, then, must be placed firmly against a background of possible war, when the 'arts of gardening' would be required

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[55]Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, (1978; Penguin Books, 1980), p. 300.

[56]Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry & Empire*, (History Book Club with Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 169-171.

[57]J. Franklin, *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan 1835-1914*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981), p. 38.

to come fully into their own. However precarious were the fortunes of agriculture, and the economy in general, gardening titles continued to rise in number. The growing magazine trade, however, had little adverse effect upon the sales of books, if the numbers of new titles and new editions may be taken as a guide.

Mapping the Garden: Urban Surveys as Garden Guides.

In recent years there has been some debate about the use of maps within garden and architectural history, particularly for the Georgian period. Jean O'Neill's discussion of the two well-known surveys of London published in 1746 for the Huguenot map-maker and topographer John Rocque, accepts the plans as *de facto* depictions of gardens in the period. This seems reasonable enough, given that she focuses upon ancient aristocratic estates which benefit from much additional topographical and anecdotal data.[58] Neil Burton's chapter on Town Gardens in *Life in the Georgian City* is necessarily more circumspect because he and fellow author Dan Cruikshank consider in detail the town houses built along London's feeder roads in the mid- to late-Georgian period, for whose appearance there is little evidence save the diagrams on maps (fig. 3.2). However, the authors rightly note that 'these are often dismissed as merely conventional, but even if they were not based on the actual lay-outs, it is becoming clear that town gardens in the eighteenth century were laid out in very much this style.'[59] Between the 1850s and 1880s, detailed depictions of gardens can be found on virtually every large-scale map of London which encompassed its suburbs. These, however, are markedly different in character from the gardens adjoining earlier suburban homes. From around 1820 new gardens, at least those in the most fashionable of new suburbs, developed along much less angularly geometric lines, around London and elsewhere (figs. 3.1 and 5.19). Serpentine paths meander through gardens with undulating borders of what we know from other sources to be free-planted shrubs and specimen trees - and there was much more grass in use. Given

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[58]Jean O'Neill, 'John Rocque as a Guide to Gardens', *Garden History*, 16 (1), 1988, (8-16).

[59]Dan Cruikshank and Neil Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, (Viking Penguin, 1990), pp. 202, 204.

that map symbols indicate the difference between orchard and forest trees, we can also, with the help of written descriptions, reasonably ascertain the kinds of trees predominating in a particular area. As the century progressed, the formerly conventional plan - symmetrically arranged plats, divided by gravel or flagged paths, and containing beds of shrubs and flowers - gradually disappeared from both gardening books and maps of suburban areas.

That Victorian maps of London's suburbs might equally portray standard models of contemporary garden design should not be dismissed; their very status as standard or conventional plot lay-outs renders them interesting artefacts in their own right. However, a cursory glance at the mapping of larger parks and public gardens shows them to be fairly accurate representations of actual ground plans. Edward Stanford's *Library Map of London and its Suburbs*, 1862, for example, was published to coincide with the International Exhibition of that year. He was unlikely, therefore, to misrepresent the grounds of, say, the Royal Horticultural Society within the Exhibition's site at Kensington Gore (figs. 3.3-3.4), or those of Regent's Park (fig. 3.14). Indeed, he may well have obtained officially sanctioned surveys of these sites. Why, then, should he invent, or roughly appropriate, the style of gardens enjoyed in neighbouring domestic plots? Stanford and his team of draughtsmen tramped the streets of London in pursuit of accuracy; Henry Mayhew took to a hot-air balloon to supplement his down-to-earth view of the city that same year. As Ralph Hyde notes in his discussion of Stanford's map, 'in no time London was stretched out beneath them, suburban fields like green baize table covers, roadways like long narrow ribbons, the river resembling a metallic snake'; and quoted Mayhew that '[t]here is an innate desire in all men to view the earth and its cities and planes from exceedingly high places [...] to take as it were an angel's view of that huge town.'[60]

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[60]Ralph Hyde, introductory text to facsimile edition of Stanford's Library Map of London and its Suburbs, 1862, section 1, (Harry Margary in association with the Guildhall Library, London, 1980), n.p.

3.2. Three Gardens for North London Suburbs

> If the regular City man, who leaves Lloyds at five o' clock, and drives home to Hackney, Clapton, Stamford Hill, or elsewhere can be said to have any daily recreation beyond his dinner, it is his garden.[61]

This section looks at how gardening literature used a combination of 'ideal' or 'model' suburban gardens with plans and illustrations of actual plots as guides for the reader. Readers of modern gardening magazines will be familiar with this pattern, but its historical significance should not be obscured on account of its apparent internal logic. Organising a publication in this way indicated the sorts of arrangement to which the enthusiastic amateur could reasonably hope to aspire at home on his own piece of ground; it also allowed him - very often a 'City man' and his wife and children, gardening in the evenings and on Sundays - to feel part of a wider community of suburban gardeners. The suburban gardening community felt that it shared not only similarly placed plots of ground, but with the help of the similarly placed editor, the community was made to feel a part of the magazine itself.

Throughout his married life James Shirley Hibberd lived almost exclusively in and around the suburbs of North and North-East London. Shirley and Sarah Hibberd moved several times between 1855 and the 1880s, for reasons of health, improved income and more garden space. In each of the houses they took, the Hibberds made a garden. Initially the couple created them together, but owing to Sarah's ill-health Shirley undertook the outdoor work alone; Sarah organised the conservatories, ferneries, Wardian Cases, and other glazed containers for delicate plants. Hibberd used these indoor and outdoor gardens, and those of a select group of friends living in the same neighbourhood, as the subjects of his many publications. He provided detailed information of their plan and elevation, annotated engravings of a more picturesque nature, and extensive lists of plants and garden hardware with addresses for their ordering and purchase.

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[61]Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, (1839), p. 117.

Suburban Gardens in Pentonville, Tottenham and Stoke Newington.

First published in 1855, *The Town Garden*, subtitled a 'Manual for the Management of City and Suburban Gardens', was the result of the newly married Hibberds' experience of gardening at 42 Cumming Street, Pentonville; he had already published *Brambles and Bayleaves* ('Essays on Rural Life'), the same year. Pentonville, a fashionable suburb when it was developed in the 1780s, remained a respectable residential district north of Bloomsbury during the Hibberds' tenure there between 1850 and 1855. In 1856, after a brief sojourn to Sarah's mother's home in Chelsea,[62] the Hibberds returned north and settled at Church Road Nursery, Tottenham. At some time between 1856 and 1857 Hibberd wrote autobiographically that 'the amateur' had moved again: 'in consideration of the health of his wife, [he] has lately abandoned a garden in the country, and taken a villa at Stoke Newington, where the air suits her better than the marshy spot in which he, years ago, pitched his tent.'[63] Outer, rural suburbs were not always desirable. They gave up the country garden in Tottenham, where Shirley Hibberd had written *Rustic Adornments*, and took a villa nearer to Town in Lordship Terrace.[64] Lordship Terrace was still relatively open, being sandwiched between market gardens and Newington Park to the west and Abney Park Cemetery to the east. North of the garden was Hibberd's nursery, a lane, and open fields. The centre of Stoke Newington was a short walk to the south. At the heart of the Nonconformist community, the Terrace, built in the 1820s, was situated

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[62]Possibly owing to a miscarriage and hysterectomy. See Anne Wilkinson, 'Shirley Hibberd: Stoke Newington's Forgotten Gardener', *Hackney History*, 4, 1995, (13-22), 16. Sarah Hibberd was an invalid for the rest of her life.

[63]*Floral World*, 1 (2), 1858, 36.

[64]Although the recent biography of Hibberd by Anne Wilkinson gives the address as Meadow Lane, some confusion surrounds the naming of this street. The 1870 Ordnance Survey map of the area gives it as Meadow Lane, and Hackney's index of street names indicates that the road was called Meadow Lane until 1892 when it became Lordship Terrace. However, Stanford's map of 1862 also registers it as Lordship Terrace. As the Hibberds lived at this address from c. 1857 to 1871 I have called it Lordship Terrace, in line with the introduction to the 1987 reprint of *Rustic Adornments* (1857) by John Sales. The houses, built c. 1820, do not survive.

> just under the shadow of the pretty old church at Stoke Newington, and the look out is free and uninterrupted, right across the meadows, to Muswell Hill, with the Lordship-road Reservoir, like a silvery mirror, intervening.[65]

Shortly after settling at this address in 1859, Hibberd introduced the second edition of the *Town Garden* by confirming that 'two separate periods of residence in the immediate vicinity of London' had informed this pocket-sized manual of practical gardening.[66] To accompany the very simple plan of the Pentonville garden, the new edition reproduced additional engravings of the house at Lordship Terrace, including a plan and portrait elevation of the forecourt and house, and a ground plan with planting instructions for the long back garden (figs. 3.10, 3.11, 3.13). That this was to be the most complex Hibberd garden was probably owing to their long residence there, amounting to some fourteen years, before they moved to Bridge House, Hermitage Road, around the corner, for want of garden space.

When compared with the graphic details, Hibberd's written descriptions of the Stoke Newington garden seem accurate enough, and the images and text appear to corroborate each other. Comparison with a map of 1871, however, at which time the garden had had some thirteen years to mature, shows it to be pretty nearly an exact match (fig. 3.12). It belonged to one of a row of five pairs of early nineteenth-century semi-detached houses, abutted by a single detached villa. Each house had rectangular slip of garden extending behind, but the Hibberds' was easily the longest, because of the nursery attached at the rear. Although Hibberd was a well-known gardener amongst his middle-class public (to whom he refused access on account of his wife's health) it seems unlikely that either the extent or layout of his garden should be singled out for special exactitude by contemporary map-makers. Seen among the multitude of surrounding gardens, Hibberd's garden does not exactly leap off the page, while his house was one of the smallest in the street. If we accept that the draughtsmen responsible for the map did not copy Hibberd's garden exactly, randomly sketching

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[65]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858, 36. Now West Reservoir, off Green Lanes.

[66]Hibberd, *Town Garden*, 1859, p. vi.

variations on the same theme in gardens all around, the explanation for similar designs in the area may be explained in several ways. In the first place, it could indicate that Hibberd had had a hand in designing the neighbouring gardens himself, which may well have been the case. It could also have been connected with neighbourly cause-and-effect, the sharing of plants and designs, etc., over the fence. But given that designs for the same period were similar for all the London suburbs, and for other suburbs beyond, it seems unlikely that this was the sole cause. It is possible that the similarity of the designs simply indicated the prevailing fashion for gardening in the period. Naturally, this was also the style preferred by periodicals and guidebooks, many of which, although independent, contained articles written by working gardeners attached to the horticultural trade. Most suburban householders, especially those who moved house regularly like the Hibberds, but had not their expertise, would not carry out major gardening alterations themselves. Gardeners could be hired by the hour from local nurseries, while the digging, stone-picking and other unskilled tasks could be carried out by a common jobbing gardener for pennies. It is not surprising, therefore, that gardens of a particular size and period should incorporate a related set of designs. Nevertheless, I have decided to take the shape of Hibberd's gardens as examples, if sophisticated ones, of the real thing. However, there is other evidence to support the idea that gardens were plotted accurately on a number of maps, until when, after about the 1880s, the rate of London's suburban expansion had accelerated to such an extent as to render a blanket survey of the capital's domestic gardens impracticable. The 1871 Ordnance Survey map of Clerkenwell, King's Cross and the Angel, for instance, most probably depicts a tiny plan of the Hibberds' Cumming Street garden, some decades after they had left the address in 1855 (figs. 3.7-3.8).

As we have seen, the *Floral World* routinely suggested the sort of garden whose shape, size and arrangement of plants would have been an attainable ideal for most of its readers, a group who were self-professedly 'amateurs residing in the vicinity of "smoketown," say, within four miles of St. Paul's on the one side, and

Whitehall on the other.'[67] But, like the *Town Garden* of 1855, the *Floral World* also gave actual examples of contemporary inner-suburban plots. In its second issue, Hibberd published a detailed article on the 'plan of a town garden'. This opened with the unpromising statement that 'imaginary plans for gardens are, generally speaking, a waste of engraving and printing.' What he proposed instead were 'actual reductions from the working plans of an amateur'. This very modern Arcadia, which overlooked reservoirs on the one side and was bounded by the railway on the other, was the Hibberds' own Stoke Newington garden. Lordship Terrace provided the model for many of the suburban plots he described, namely those 'within a sixpenny ride of the Bank'.[68] 'Its general configuration,' was, he said, representative not only 'of the stereotyped London garden - a long narrow slip,' but also of those in 'the suburbs of large towns, where, for the most part, the gardens more or less resemble this, both in proportions and extent.'[69] These annotated plans are notable not only for their detail but their charting of the transformation of an old garden into its 'improved' modern form. Hibberd took as his cue the lack of horticultural information presently available to this class of suburban gardeners and, importantly, the recently induced incentive to their progress in the form of 'compulsory abolition of the smoke nuisance' (1858) and the 'Gardens in Towns Protection Bill and Smoke Act, soon to be in operation' (1865), which promised to make plant cultivation easier.[70]

Fig. 3.6. shows the illustrations which accompanied Hibberd's *Floral World* article, 'Plan of a Town Garden', cited above. Plan No. 1 'represents the garden, as it stood when the tenant [i.e. Hibberd] took possession lately.' 'Its actual position then,' he continued, 'it is impossible to describe, for from one end to the other it was a perfect ruin.' Plan No. 2 depicts the newly-fashioned garden, and No. 3 provides the key to the planting of the finished whole. Beginning on the southern side, Hibberd

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[67]*Floral World*, 6 (10), 1863, 240.

[68]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858, 38.

[69]*Ibid.*, 36.

[70]*Floral World*, 1 (3), 1858, 49; *Floral World*, 8 (11), 1865, 250.

'determined here to make a pretty arrangement of shrubs, masonry and flowers', thereby transforming the previously bare 'little forecourt measuring some five-and-thirty feet square.' This, unusually, was not the main entrance to the house, which was entered from the north side through what would normally have been designated the private grounds at the rear.[71] Presumably this was to capitalise upon the views over the reservoir to the north-west, though it was also the public entrance to the nursery.[72] It is possible therefore that the previous residents had neglected the rear aspect of their home as it did not serve the standard function of a 'forecourt' which, as Hibberd wrote elsewhere, was 'unquestionably as much for the joy of the wayfarer as for the proprietor of the house,'[73] and was thus where character and taste were most immediately obvious to the outside world. Hibberd altered the front space most substantially, presumably because although it was not the main route of access it maintained its 'front of the house' role in projecting to the road (figs. 3.10-3.11). The revised plan of the larger garden at the rear remained similar to that laid out by the previous gardener, at least to present-day eyes, even though the angular 'cockney' shaped beds had been modernised, and the planting 'improved', within. As we see in Chapter Four, 'cockney' was a term equivalent to 'suburban' in the present-day, used to denigrate something at once conservative, out-of-fashion, and out-of-place in both the town and country.

If the treatment of the forecourt was similar to that espoused by Hibberd for other homes, the explanation given was not. Again, it is likely that the unusual 'back-to-front' aspect of the Stoke Newington site accounted for any discrepancies in Hibberd's horticultural theory, although he was by no means incapable of contradicting himself, even within the same publication. However, he wrote in the *Floral World* that 'as the house on the south side is stuccoed, and the steps down from the hall as imposing as it is possible to be in a small villa [...] the only place for anything of an

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[71]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858, 36-37.

[72]It is not clear whether Hibberd's nursery was a commercial enterprise or merely a supplementary plot in which to perform experiments for the benefit of his publishing activities.

[73]Shirley Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 363.

artistic character is the forecourt'.[74] Yet 'from the front windows, looking north' at *v.* he made the border 'next the house, as gay as possible, without verbenas and geraniums' (which were 'gaudy'), by removing the 'old aucubas [laurels], that blocked the windows', and planting instead 'roses, rhododendrons and fuschias, and herbaceous perennials such as delphiniums, phloxes, aquilegias, &c.'[75]

In *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste* (1856) Shirley Hibberd directed his

> suggestions so that they may severally apply to gardens of large or small dimensions; to the Flower Garden as a feature of an extensive pleasure-ground, or as confined in narrow limits within the walls of a suburban property.[76]

Here, he reckoned that 'you need not lavish much upon the forecourt, but what you have must be in first-rate order.' Hollies, lauristinus, Japanese or spotted laurels, tree box, rhododendron, common or Portugal laurels, and snow-berry were advocated as suitable specimens for 'a central part of the lawn'. Shrubs might also be planted in the borders,

> for this front court should present a *fullness* of character, to give the house a substantial aspect, but all must be trim as a Corporal's boots. No ugly branches straggling out of the line, no rampant growth to shut out light and suggest that you can't afford to keep a gardener.[77]

Important as this last consideration was within households not confident in their middle-class status, Hibberd laid even more stress upon the precise order in which the front of the home should appear. Because a 'gaudy display is most unmeet in the forecourt', he suggested 'displaying some of those precious snowdrops, crocuses, hyacinths, and tulips that are never out of place anywhere' in the ground beneath the shrubs, planted perhaps among some 'graceful masses of azalea in bloom, iris, agapanthus [African lily], delphinium, lily, hydrangea, peony and chrysanthemum'.[78] But the reader was urged to 'keep away for use elsewhere every dahlia, hollyhock,

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[74]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858, 38.

[75]*Ibid.*, 40.

[76]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 347, emphasis in the original.

[77]*Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 362, emphasis in the original.

[78]*Ibid.*, p. 363.

rose, verbena, *fancy* calceolaria, pelargonium, and fuschia that you have unless you are determined to make a flower garden of it.'[79] These florists' flowers should be reserved for areas less open to public scrutiny: 'If you kept your dahlias, and standard roses, and hollyhocks away from your forecourt, you will now find the use of them, for - presto! we leave the van for the rear, and can more safely indulge our whims in gardening.'[80] Further, and in spite of recommending 'a pretty arrangement of shrubs, masonry and flowers' for the forecourt at Stoke Newington,[81] in *Rustic Adornments* Hibberd had earlier written that 'architectural embellishments', including masonry, were only 'admissible' before the house on condition that they 'be sparingly used, for what gives perfect grace and luxuriance to the private grounds [at the rear] has an air of ostentation when exposed to the daily gaze of an "admiring public".'[82] But in spite of the apparent confusion between the two modes of planning the forecourt, they were consistent in their common espousal of hardy evergreens. The majority of new evergreens had been introduced to Europe from the late-eighteenth century, but had become a feasible option for the ordinary gardener about the mid-nineteenth. These plants not only afforded year round greenery (and privacy), they retained their form, and most responded well to hard pruning so that the overall effect would remain constant, or as desired, barring adverse weather conditions. Additional touches included perennial bulbs and annuals, but these changeable features should be secondary to the larger design.

'Now for the geometric garden, and the beds on terraces and lawns.' Now the uninitiated reader began to understand what Hibberd meant by 'gaudy display'. 'Here the colours are to blaze like the variegated lamps at Vauxhall [Gardens], or the fireworks of the Peace celebration', at the end of the Crimean Wars.[83] This was where the new hot-coloured hybrids and florists' flowers had their place. If modernity was

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[79]*Ibid.*, p. 364, emphasis in the original.

[80]*Ibid.*

[81]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858, 23.

[82]*Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 363.

[83]*Ibid.*, p. 371.

signified by gaudiness, a term which in mid-century was still not necessarily pejorative, the 'artistic character' recommended for the public aspect of a garden was supposed to confer a more traditional, or at least calming aspect. Before the home, Hibberd suggested, blatant displays of individuality were inappropriate: however secluded, a villa community should offer a united front of restful, if not entirely rural, greenery.

'Returning once more to the home garden',[84] the plans given by Hibberd in the *Floral World* and *Rustic Adornments* were very similar, the former being more elaborate because of its larger area. In this plan, beginning at the northern-most side by the entrance, Hibberd led the reader through a garden 'laid in turf' up to the house along the 'winding walk' through fruit trees. 'Beginning, then, from this entrance-gate, we have, as we enter, a picture of a wilderness in little. The walk up to the house and on through the extent of the garden, is four feet six inches wide.' This was left largely intact but for the dwarf box edging which originally ran 'from the entrance gate as far as *a*, adjoining the hall door', 'and the same round the large bed, as far as *b*'. He uprooted the box and removed 'a cistern, which the previous tenant constructed'.[85] Other alterations to the existing plan were similarly unradical, being predominantly concerned with simplifying the design and modernising the planting.

> The central bed [*R*] is planted with dwarf hybrid perpetuals [roses], with a standard white rose in the centre [...] Some climbing roses were [...] planted in each border at *t* ; in the spring these will be trained over the arch, across the path [...] The border round each way, from *s* to *q*, is also planted with roses, in three rows, as to heights, with standards and tall growing roses dwarfs towards the fence, where spaces are left for some hollyhocks to tower up above them on each side.[86]

The central bed was the focal point of the garden, artistically arranged in a precisely delineated pattern: it was designed to look like art, not nature. The roses were cultivated hybrids while the centrepiece represented state of the art horticultural technology. Standard roses - meaning upright, like the standard lamp - were much-prized symbols of modernity, admired for their ingenious grafting (fig. 4.8). Other

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[84]*Ibid.*, p. 394.

[85]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858, 36.

[86]*Ibid.*, 39.

features, apart from the meandering path, were removed to the borders, as was increasingly the fashion:

> The turf will not be disturbed further, except for a half-a-dozen pin-cushion beds for standard roses and bedding plants, and the three fanciful beds on the plan will be turfed over and extinguished, for though these do not look amiss on paper, they have a most ungainly and cockney sort of appearance at present, and so their days are numbered.[87]

Thus the private, or family, garden with its expanse of cut turf enclosing brightly-coloured and artfully-planted island and smaller 'pin-cushion' beds represented cutting-edge modernity within the smaller suburban garden. Although hindsight may obscure the technological skill supporting such a garden, this pattern and variations upon it were widely recognised at the time as modern; they would continue to be so, in modified form until very nearly the end of the century. Borders now posed little problem, thanks to the introduction of the mowing machine in 1832.[88] The long border at the side of the house in fig. 3.6 no.2 was not in contact with any grass, being located between the wall and the path. 'In spring, the border, *a*, *f*, *g*, will be planted with the best evergreens, in groups, and with a selection of showy, herbaceous perennials.' This border was, with the forecourt, largely self-perpetuating: once established it required only maintenance, unlike the beds where changes were made seasonally for year-round

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[87]*Ibid.*

[88]Invented in 1830 the lawnmower patent was bought in 1832 by the Ipswich Quaker agricultural engineers, Ransomes, Simms & Jeffereys. From the first, mowers were advertised as labour-saving but desirable consumables for the home market, rather than undustrial appliances for the trade. After mid-century, the mowing-machine was used in domestic gardens, thanks largely to its popularisation by the Exhibitions of Art and Industry of the 1850s and '60s. Journalistic and public interest encouraged the two main manufacturers, Green, Shanks and Ransomes and a host of later companies to invent smaller models, which were not only cheaper but lighter and more easily manoeuvred. Ease of mowing encouraged the owners of moderate sized plots to devote more area to grass (wealthy gardeners had long relied on ill-paid labourers with scythes), but also necessitated that any island beds planted within the lawn were of a shape which facilitated all-round mowing. Small, manageable and affordable models, including 'ladies' mowers' were available by the 1850s, but many households seem to have paid a jobbing gardener to mow the lawn on an informal, seasonal basis, rather than buy their own machine.

interest and colour. Hence it was in bedding that horticultural trends were most keenly set and followed.

In *Rustic Adornments* Shirley Hibberd offered methods for arranging 'even the smallest of suburban town gardens'. This he did not illustrate but it turned out to be the plan of his 1850-1855 garden at Pentonville illustrated in the *Town Garden* (fig. 3.7). Superficially, the most striking feature of the two gardens was the long narrow shape commonly provided by the builder. The later garden, however, was about double the length of the earlier plot, and it is likely that the Hibberds moved here for this reason as well as the more rural situation. The dimensions of fig. 3.6. were 280 feet (i.e. including the house and forecourt) by between 35 to 38 feet overall, the walls not having been laid in a straight line. The dimensions given for fig. 3.7. were for the area beginning at the French windows to the rear and the far wall, a length which Hibberd gave as 60 to 90 feet by a width of 20 to 30 for a typical suburban garden, in this case at Pentonville. I have used the smallest measurement, given its appearance on the map, but the important point was the ratio of 1:3. The dimensions of the Stoke Newington garden (i.e. from the house to the far gate) were some 215 x 35/38 feet, a ratio of around 1:6. This difference alone explained the reasons for the very different treatment of the two plots: proportion and not scale were the most important factors in determining the eventual design.

In the following paragraphs we shall see how these two plots were designed to give the impression of greater extent: elongated gardens were adapted to emphasise a more substantial breadth, while those of more squat dimensions were given the illusion of length by accentuating linear perspective. Both sorts, however, required a distant focal point which, if they had no interesting prospect like a reservoir, contrived to obscure the view beyond by drawing the eye to some feature at the foot of the garden. An 1840 issue of John Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* described just such an arrangement in the layout of a 'small' garden made originally for a 'master in chancery' at Theobalds, near Waltham Cross, in Essex.

> The extremity of this lawn is bounded by a public road, and to disguise this boundary it is ingeniously contrived to have two

> returning walks at the end, one separated from the other by a narrow plantation of shrubs and flowers, in consequence of which the immediate proximity of the boundary is never once suspected by the spectator, who, seeing that there are two walks, concludes that there is no want of room; and, therefore, *the idea of a boundary in that quarter never occurs to him.*[89]

The following year, Jane Loudon advised on the creation of illusory boundaries for gardens of more limited extent. Her *Practical Instructions in Gardening for Ladies* (1841) recommended that

> Even in a small street garden with three low walls on three of the sides, and the house on the fourth, a very pleasing effect may be produced by effectually concealing the boundary walls with ivy, and *thus permitting the imagination to fix the boundary walls where it will.*[90]

Earlier in the century it had been the practice to cut a 'window' through foliage at the most distant point of a garden to frame the view but, as railways carved up such places as were left and building further encroached upon the picture, the practice of creating an alternative vanishing point *within* the garden was increasingly advocated. Although these exercises in concealing change in the surrounding environment may seem to have reflected conservative attitudes to progress, suburban gardeners welcomed modernity in the form of technological innovation into their gardens. Attempts to conceal the bounds were made purely for reasons of privacy, which was pressing in a small plot overlooked on at least two sides, while at the same time striving to make the garden appear more substantial in extent. In this way, family life might be extended into the back garden from within the home in the knowledge that members were reasonably invisible to the outside world. Hired gardeners, too, were thus obscured as, importantly, was the lack of one.

The garden in fig. 3.6. was given a meandering path and irregularly placed borders and beds, as opposed to straight and symmetrical lines emphasising distance, to give the illusion of breadth. Although the entrance to the garden in fig. 3.6 is to the rear, the reason for the largest and most elaborately filled bed *R* being so far from the

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[89]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 6 (new series), 1840, 587, emphasis mine.

[90]Jane Loudon, *Practical Instruction in Gardening for Ladies*, (John Murray, 1841; 1843 edn.), p. 337, emphasis mine.

house is precisely to bring it nearer, so that it will appear of a similar size as the smaller bed *x, before* the window, *e*. The garden in fig. 3.7, on the other hand, was treated in a symmetrical, regular fashion - what was termed geometric or formal at the time - because it had the less extreme ratio 1:3 and a tendency to appear foreshortened. The borders took as their queue the straight lines of the existing walls which Hibberd, like Jane Loudon, would have draped with 'ivy, clematis and jasmine'. We may assume that he deliberately chose dark colours and, in particular, bluey-greens, for the far wall in the knowledge that they would appear to recede. Although he was not explicit on this point, by covering the far wall with 'ivy, virginian creeper, white jasmine, or any thick, shrubby, and *dark* climber',[91] a gardener could open up more space for elaborate floral designs in the lawn without their seeming squeezed into too small a space. In order to accentuate the perceived distance, and to differentiate the garden's side walls from that which they met, Hibberd contrived a further device.

The border below this far wall was to 'be raised into a bank' to create a rock-work for Alpine plants which would be invisible from the vantage point of the house. Rock-works were highly fashionable garden structures throughout the nineteenth century, found in public parks and tiny gardens. The finer elements of horticultural taste forbade their erection anywhere near the house: they must be placed where they might be 'happened upon' in the dim recesses of the garden and planted in seemingly natural style with ferns and other appropriate sorts of flowers and foliage. (Although they crop up throughout the thesis, rock-work and rockeries and their literatures are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.) Hence Hibberd's remark that 'within a considerable distance of your house it ought to be impossible for you to say to a friend, "come and see my rockwork," because it should have no special importance at all.'[92] The bank was to rise from the level of the garden to some three feet, where it would reveal the rock-work and, 'toward the adjoining borders it should slope into the general level of the garden' again, so that the final effect was of a raised mound which would

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[91]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 408, emphasis in the original.

[92]*Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 409.

draw the eye onwards. 'The surface of the bank should be planted with showy flowering plants [...] and the front rockwork with a few good alpines [...] the slopes adjoining the side borders should be studded with crocus, snowdrop, narcissus, jonquil, crown imperial, gladiolus'.[93] At either side of the mound, *x*, were to be planted larger specimens. 'Now in one corner place a syringa [lilac] or a holly, and in the other a few rhododendrons. A white poplar, birch, or tree of any kind, will be an improvement, if planted towards one side.'[94] In short, Hibberd devoted all his attention to the treatment of the periphery of the garden in fig. 3.7, while he concentrated primarily upon the enclosed space in fig. 3.6: there were no suggestions for the planting of the 'one central oval, and two small circular beds' in the former, and no recipes for clothing the walls in the latter; this he would leave to personal taste.

A City Florists' Garden in Tufnell Park.

A third garden described in the *Floral World* was illustrated with 'bird's eye' and plan views (fig. 3.9) In this plot we see how variations in the ground level contributed to its visual enlargement. This 'novel and elegant town garden' belonged to Hibberd's 'much-loved friend, James Crute, Esq., of Holloway.' The article appeared in the December 1866 edition and was remarkably similar to the design of the Pentonville garden (made between 1850 and 1855, published in the *Town Garden*, 1855, and described in *Rustic Adornments*, 1856), though Hibberd does not imply that he assisted with its planning and planting; the illustration gives the location as Tufnel (sic) Park. We learn instead that the 'alterations had been designed and carried into effect [...] during a season of sickness,' by Crute himself, when his illness had 'compelled him to neglect his city business, and for a season almost completely prostrated his powers.' Hibberd was 'curious therefore, to see the result of ingenuity exercised under such peculiar circumstances.' He began the article, as so often, by

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[93]*Ibid.*, p. 408.

[94]*Ibid.*, p. 407.

appealing to his readers who dug similarly-sized plots. Mr. Crute's garden measured 80 by 36 feet and

> is one of the many thousands that abound in the suburbs of London. An oblong slip, walled in right and left, and, fortunately, with a pleasing prospect beyond, over grounds well timbered. Nevertheless, if it had not this advantage of trees beyond the boundary, the hands that designed the beautiful scene now represented would have hit upon some method of obviating the discordance of a look out upon flat walls and angular chimneys, which is the sort of prospect common to London gardens.[95]

Again, it was stressed that no landscape architect was called in to remodel 'such a plot', for 'there is a chance in the first case that he will sneer at it.' The owner, like Hibberd, had not moved into a brand-new house with a garden waiting to be made and we are told that it 'was a very pretty garden before it underwent its last modifications. It consisted of just such a plot of turf as is now represented, but the turf was *flat*.' Thus the alterations made were to the elevation and not to the plan, which was all but retained intact. 'The great merit of the present scheme, and indeed its one peculiar and original feature' which Hibberd generously wished to share with his readers, 'is that the large grass plot in the centre, and the circular clump near the windows of the house, are moulded to a series of elegant waving superfices.' He clearly reckoned that this design improved upon his ten-year-old Pentonville plan, even if his description did not. 'Perhaps I shall be better understood if I say that the surfaces of each of the two principle features are worked into elegant and *symmetrical undulations*.'[96] The final choice of plants was left to the judgement of the reader, to be determined by taste, geography, aspect and income. Although the description was detailed, it emphasised the overall design rather than the qualities of individual flowers and trees. We know simply that Mr. Crute planted shrubs and hollyhocks among his statues at the far end of his garden and that he grew both exotics and hardy natives. In the next paragraph, however, we are told that the garden also sported sub-tropical bedding, whose expensive varieties of cannas, gladioli and yucca, were seen in the most fashionable

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[95]*Floral World*, 1 (new series), (12), 1866, 355.

[96]*Ibid.*, 356, emphasis in the original.

parks and gardens in the 1860s. Before his conservatory was a display of hardy herbaceous and bedding plants; and in 'the large circular compartment which we arrive at next', were four small shrubs in the deepest depressions of the 'undulating grass', and 'a great diamond-shaped clump of gladioli and cannas.' Note that in the following quotation he stressed two things. First, he emphasised the *annuals* planted *last year*, thus implying that this year will see a different scheme. Secondly, the remaining plants were *evergreen shrubs*, and will thus remain as placed for the time being:

> The large central compartment is a grass plot undulated. It has around it a sharp rim, which was planted last summer with variegated mint and blue lobelia [...] The embellishments of the plot are six flower-beds and some very pretty plants, the latter being yuccas, small Irish yews, and junipers, all small, neat, and appropriate.[97]

Finally, we learn that Crute was a florist, and specialised in particular branches of floriculture, (see Chapter Seven), for 'the borders are appropriated to bedding plants in the ribbon style, and in the rear of the ribbon on each side Mr. Crute keeps his specimen chrysanthemums.' Hibberd was specific on the point of leaving the final choice of plants to his reader, in order to draw attention to the landscaping:

> I abstain from enumerating the bedding plants employed in the decoration of this garden, because I wish to be as brief as possible, and to direct attention to the scheme, which is original, ingenious, elegant, and appropriate to a space so limited; whereas the bedding plants admit of endless variety, and will probably differ every year so long as Mr. Crute shall enjoy this little paradise, and that it may *be* long is the prayer of his faithful friend.[98]

In devoting so much space to these three gardens made between 1850 and 1871 in suburban North London, it has become clear that whether they depict the plots accurately - and there is no reason to suggest otherwise - the plans were created for a class of gardening amateur which was expected to understand and interpret for its own use the detailed information which they contained. Far from creating a miniature version of the aristocratic estate, or even 'scaled-down versions of Paddington or Primrose Hill [...] suburbs like Holloway and Hornsey' did not ape 'their betters in the

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[97]*Ibid.*, emphases mine.

[98]*Ibid.*, 358.

pursuit of taste, decorum, and anxious gentility'[99] as Roy Porter has suggested but found a model appropriate to their own circumstance. Charles Dickens made a point of suggesting that the opposite was indeed the case in his 'London Recreations' (1836):

> The wish of persons in the humbler classes of life to ape the manners and customs of those [...] above them, is often the subject of remark. We do not think the attempt at imitation prevails in any degree.[100]

In any case, as Colin Campbell has written, 'behaviour which is imitative is not necessarily emulative. Imitation is itself merely an activity, not a motive':[101]

> The fact that a merchant or shopkeeper was now both able and willing to purchase a product previously characteristic of superior aristocratic consumption patterns does not necessarily mean that he sought to imitate an aristocratic way of life.[102]

Journalists writing for amateur gardeners from all sections of the middle class expected their readers to design gardens which were *appropriate* to the space allotted, to the house which they accompanied, and to the rank and income of the household. This garden would maximise both the extent and topography to show off choice plants, and the home, to advantage.

3.3. The Landscape of Two Suburbs in Victorian London

Part three of this chapter considers more subjective accounts of the suburban landscape and garden and their personal significance within everyday lives. Although this material was also notionally objective, and comes in the form of the topographical and tourist account, it, too, employs garden descriptions as indices of rank and status. These tell the reader as much about contemporary class, race and gender prejudice as they do about the preference for certain forms of gardens in the period. Diaries and autobiographical writing reveal more intimate relationships with the domestic

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[99]Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, 1995, p. 282.

[100]Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, (1839; Penguin, 1995), pp. 117-118.

[101]Colin Campbell, 'Understanding Traditional and Modern Patterns of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century England: A Character-Action Approach', in John Brewer and Roy Porter, (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993; 1994 edn.), pp. 40-41.

[102]*Ibid.*, p. 40.

landscape, while a discussion of the role of the garden in nineteenth-century novels indicates the different meanings which they conveyed to a readership well-versed in the minutiae of contemporary social, cultural and sexual signifiers. The fictional garden was at once a literary device which, because it was a familiar frame of reference, allowed for flights of fancy, while being calculated, like the gardens charted by social commentators, to indicate in a few lines the taste, rank, and even morals of its making.

The Immoral Geography of St. John's Wood.

Guidebooks and other ostensibly objective surveys of this middle-class suburb usually painted a picture of respectability and seclusion. *London City Suburbs as they are Today* (1893) singled it out with the 'more "official" suburbs, such as Chelsea and Kensington [which] still retain, in spite of the efforts of the builder, a kind of rural air.'[103] Unusually, the author of this illustrated book had no particular axe to grind about suburban development and attempted to explore both the geography and 'psychology' of '"London City", with London Suburbs attached to it',[104] in the manner of Dickens and Thackeray. These were novelists, he said, 'who understood their London psychology well' and who 'interpreted the [...] odd concatenations' of the 'poor district promoted into fashion' and the demise of the once fashionable district into so-called shabby gentility.[105] Novels, on the other hand, used a sort of psychology to hint at a darker side of suburban living in St. John's Wood, screened by its shrubs and trees and fences. In these imaginative works we find a shabby-genteel neighbourhood whose borderline respectability is obscured by its alleged 'seclusion'. In Wilkie Collins' detective novel, *The Moonstone*, for example, which is set in 1848-49, the horticulturally-minded Chief Inspector Cuff discovers that although the 'fine pictures and statues; furniture tastefully selected and admirably made; a conservatory of the rarest flowers, the match of which it would not be easy to find in all London' belong to

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[103]Percy Fitzgerald, *London City Suburbs as they are Today*, (Leadenhall Press, 1893), pp. 5-6.

[104]Fitzgerald, *London City Suburbs*, 1893, p. 5.

[105]*Ibid.*, p. 9.

an impressive and outwardly-respectable suburban villa in St. John's Wood, these very items suggest as much as conceal the illicit behaviour of its unmarried occupants. Altogether 'the pictures, the statues, the flowers, the jewels, the carriages and the horses [...] the villa' connoted cunning artifice and licentiousness as well as pretensions to grandeur: the items of conspicuous consumption had been paid for with money embezzled from an Evangelical Christian ladies' association.[106]

Although Anthony Trollope's *The Small House at Allington* (1862-64) is set largely in the country town of that name, it also gave the reader a brief sketch of a small garden at St. John's Wood. The description is in line with those of comparable gardens even though this space is tainted by the negative associations which it conjures for a character, Crosbie, who hates the 'windy corner' of London in which it is situated. Crosbie reached his destination through a door in a wall:

> This door stood buried as it were in a wall, and opened on to a narrow passage which ran across a so-called garden, or front yard, containing on each side two iron receptacles for geraniums, painted to look like Palissy ware, and a naked female on a pedestal. No spot in London was, as he thought, so cold as the bit of pavement immediately in front of that door.[107]

Mrs. Oliphant's novel *Neighbours on the Green*, an acutely observed study of contemporary manners, described another St. John's Wood household. The book was published in 1889 and purported to describe a way of life belonging to a decade or so earlier. The house she described was occupied by a 'gentlewoman' who, having fallen on harder times than those to which she was formerly accustomed, believes she must now 'let'.

> The house we went to was a house in St. John's Wood. Everybody knows the kind of place. A garden wall, with lilacs and laburnums, all out of blossom by this time, and beginning to look brown and dusty, waving over it; inside, a little bright suburban garden, full of scarlet geraniums, divided by a white line of pavement, dazzlingly clean, from the door in the wall to the door of the house; and a stand full of more scarlet geraniums in the little square hall.[108]

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[106]Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, (1868; Penguin Books, 1955), pp. 447-448.

[107]Anthony Trollope, *The Small House at Allington*, (1862-64; Penguin Popular Classics, 1995), p. 403.

[108]Mrs. Oliphant, *Neighbours on the Green*, (1889; Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1904), p. 215.

Writing to his brother in 1884, the novelist George Gissing described St. John's Wood fondly as 'the true Bohemian locality' and hoped soon to take up lodgings there.[109] It is doubtful that Gissing took much notice of Trollope's London scenes (Gissing complained of 'Trollope? Ah I cannot read him, the man is such a terrible philistine'[110]) and yet their respective descriptions of London gardens seem equally faithful portrayals of standard or typically designed plots of their period and place. Even the meanings which the reader is directed to infer from such descriptions could be the same.

John Galsworthy's semi-autobiographical *The Forsyte Saga* makes frequent use of suburban homes and gardens to convey both accurate representations of contemporary middle-class taste and the character of their occupants. The first book in the series, *The Man of Property*, set in 1886, has good examples of this real and symbolic landscape in the suburban garden of errant son, Jo Forsyte. Unlike the other Forsytes with their mansions in Bayswater, Knightsbridge and Mayfair, Jo, his wife and two children, 'lived in St. John's Wood' and had 'a little house in Wistaria Avenue with a garden'.[111] Soon to be reunited with his son Jo, old Jolyon Forsyte ventured into this unknown territory. He

> took his journey through St. John's Wood, in the golden light that sprinkled the rounded green bushes of the acacias before the little houses, in the summer sunshine that seemed holding a revel over the little gardens; and he looked about with interest; for this was a district which no Forsyte entered without open disapproval and secret curiosity. His cab stopped in front of a small house of that peculiar buff colour which implies a long immunity from paint. It had an outer gate, and a rustic approach.[112]

Inside, 'there was a certain [...] air of shabbiness, or rather of making two ends meet, about everything.'[113] On passing through the French-windows of the double drawing-room into the garden where the family were sitting in wicker chairs, old Jolyon was

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[109]Algernon and Ellen Gissing, (eds.), *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family*, (Constable & Co. Ltd., 1927), p. 137, (April 28th 1884, to Algernon).

[110]Arthur C. Young, (ed.), *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz, 1887-1903*, (Constable, 1961), p. 5, (April 17th 1887).

[111]John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*, (W. Collins & Co. Ltd., 1922), pp. 44-45.

[112]Galsworthy, *Man of Property*, 1922, p. 90.

[113]*Ibid.*, p. 91.

similarly unimpressed. Even in the garden, with its three small flower-beds and 'the pear tree, which had long borne no fruit' in the centre of the lawn,[114] 'that sense of things being pokey haunted old Jolyon; the wicker chair creaked under his weight; the garden beds looked "daverdy"; on the far side, under a smut-stained wall, cats had made a path.'[115] We are told that it was 'a poor and miserable place' and that there was 'a drowsy hum of very distant traffic; the creepered trellis round the garden shut out everything but sky, and house, and pear tree.'[116] Galsworthy used old Jolyon's perception of this house and garden, and its neighbours in the suburb, with their suggestion of hidden secrets, to work out larger themes about the different levels of middle-class lifestyle, aspiration and propriety. As he walked away from St. John's Wood, 'towards the Edgware Road, between rows of little houses, all suggesting to him (erroneously no doubt) shady histories of some sort or kind', towards his own house at Stanhope Gate, old Jolyon reflected on the hypocrisy of Society's behaviour.[117] In spite of immense family wealth, Jo (who 'was no longer a social pariah. He was married') and his family were condemned to lease a little house in a 'ramshackle' neighbourhood as punishment for the birth, ten years ago, of their illegitimate child.[118]

On the whole, it could be argued that we are on firmer ground with the depictions of homes and gardens given by writers affiliated to the realist school at the turn of the century, epitomised by George Gissing. Although Galsworthy had links with the realists, he remained outside the circle because of the historical nature of his best-known novels. Gissing's taste for accurate geographies of London, especially in those areas which he called 'lodgers' London', bordered on obsession, perhaps because during his bleakest hours he walked the streets of London repeatedly. Journeys taken by his characters can be traced exactly onto contemporary maps, while

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[114]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

[115]*Ibid.*, p. 92.

[116]*Ibid.*, p. 95.

[117]*Ibid.*

[118]*Ibid.*, p. 44.

some of the flats and houses he detailed survive today. Nevertheless, Gissing's descriptions were quite as loaded as those of a Trollope or an Oliphant, for in their minutiae his gardens, yards, streets and houses operated as the outward signs of class and social distinction for the reader. Because he made a habit of living in areas he was researching, Gissing's fiction, though superficially realistic was perhaps more subjective than most when it came to literary description, especially given the complicated relationship of his mental health to changes in habitat.

Jeanette Marshall, the educated daughter of an eminent surgeon, of University College Hospital and University College, London, frequently accompanied her father on his visits to private patients in and around London. In 1871 she complained of his patients to her diary that, 'they have taken to living in the four corners of the globe: St. John's Wood, Hornsey & I don't know where'.[119] Mrs. Oliphant, remembering her family's moves to new suburbs in the same period, recalled one home at Harrington Square, Mornington Crescent, as 'all in a remote region near Regent's Park, upon the Hampstead Road, where it seems very strange to me we should have lived, and which, I suppose, is dreadfully shabby and out-of-the-way.' Oliphant's friend was even less well-placed, and 'lived in a small house in a street a little farther off even in the wilds than ours,' in St. John's Wood.[120] Brought up in Savile Row, Mayfair, all outer suburbs were the same to the impatient Jeanette Marshall: each represented nothing but the inconvenience of a carriage ride. Primrose Hill, Holland Park and Notting Hill and, later, Pimlico, were summarily dismissed as 'the young couples quarter' and 'the other end of nowhere'; Clapham was 'quite in the country'.[121] Following the birth of the fourth child, however, the family rented a detached suburban villa for the six members of the family, two nurses and unspecified servants, in the northern suburb of Kentish Town. 19 Roseberry Villas looked towards Holloway, the less respectable suburb

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[119]Zuzanna Shonfield, *The Precariously Privileged, a Professional Family in Victorian London*, (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1997), p. 46.

[120]Elisabeth Jay, (ed.), *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 42.

[121]Shonfield, *The Precariously Privileged*, 1997, p. 47.

where her mother, Ellen Williams had been born and brought up. Further, Mrs. Williams' inheritance, from her Welsh soap-manufacturing grandfather, was settled in investment property in Lordship Road, Stoke Newington, shortly after Shirley Hibberd had left Lordship Terrace.[122] Perhaps because it reminded her of her lowly beginnings, she and the girls were not happy in Kentish Town, and when, in 1864, Dr. Marshall suggested they remove to Wood Green far to the north, 'wife and daughters defeated the proposal, not wanting an outer suburb.'[123] Even though Jeanette Marshall considered herself attuned to refined country tastes, enjoyed botany and other rural sports, she would not countenance a move into the more rural of London's suburbs.

> I do believe (though I wd. not confess it to everyone, but you I may trust, my dear old Diary) that my long stay at Ely has rather countrified my tastes. I dislike the blacks, noise & smoke & miss the flowers & little things with wh. I can ornament my room in the country, but wh. I am afraid to have out in London, for fear of their becoming as black as soot.[124]

She was probably more concerned about what her urbane friends would say than urban pollution. Whatever her reasons, Jeanette was very firmly rooted in her Mayfair home, and had no desire for the leafy seclusion of St. John's Wood, or anywhere else. Content to keep country tastes for summer holidays, she satisfied her thirst for plants at Parmenter's, the nursery opposite the Brecknock public house, near the family's old Holloway home.[125] Given that her father carried a pistol when he travelled to Wood Green, this was not, perhaps, surprising. The last word on St. John's Wood must be Thackeray's. When, in *Vanity Fair*, he told how the deranged 'Lord George gave up his post on the European continent, and was gazetted to Brazil', Thackeray suggested that those 'sent to Coventry' need not travel so far:

> "Brazil," said one gossip to another, with a grin - "Brazil is St. John's Wood. Rio Janeiro is a cottage surrounded by four walls; and George Gaunt is accredited to a keeper, who has invested him with the order of the Strait-Waistcoat."[126]

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[122]*Ibid.*, p. 84.

[123]*Ibid.*, p. 9.

[124]*Ibid.*, p. 43.

[125]*Ibid.*, p. 80.

[126]William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, (1847; Wordsworth Editions, 1993), p. 455.

That Lord George 'was nowhere; he was gone out altogether' referred to his geographical as well as his mental state. In fact, St. John's Wood was blessed with so many asylums discreetly shaded by gardens that the area was possessed of a mental geography all its own.

Class, Rank and Modernity in Camberwell Gardens.

Written in the late-Victorian period, M. E. Braddon's series of 'suburban novels' offered the reader glimpses of *A Lost Eden* in a Camberwell landscape set in the short period between the death of the Duke of Wellington and the start of the Crimean War:

> There were no suburban parks in those days, no neat gravel walks and stiff shrubberies, no park-keeper to maintain order. Camberwell Green and Kennington Common were open to the populace, uncared for and unguarded.[127]

But in the roads around the Grove, '[t]rees grew and flourished - hawthorn and lilac, lime and sycamore, sweet bay and Portugal laurel [...] there were good tenants and bad, gardens neatly kept and gardens neglected, but the general effect was prettiness and rusticity.'[128] The 'little semi-detached house at Camberwell, rent - twenty-three pounds per annum - had a dainty prettiness not always attainable by people of larger means'. Its tenants 'were always trying to surprise one another with some improvement in house and garden, were it only a shilling rose-bush planted in the border, or a penny bunch of violets in a vase on the mantlepiece', all bought from the barrow in the Walworth Road.[129] This house, Laburnum Cottage, South Lane, had a 'little drawing-room, fifteen feet by twelve-and-a-half, lighted by one wide French-window' and looked out 'upon the semi-circular grass-plat girdled with shrubs', 'a long border full of roses, and good old-fashioned perennials - columbines and lupins,

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[127]M. E. Braddon, *A Lost Eden*, (Hutchinson & Co., 1904), p. 17.

[128]Braddon, *The Story of Barbara*, (1), (John and Robert Maxwell, 1880), p. 5.

[129]Braddon, *Story of Barbara*, 1880, pp. 4, 46.

larkspur, peonies, iris', and 'a little summer-house' for garden tools.[130] Another 'good tenant', the appropriately named Flora,

> walked all the length of Camberwell Grove, and then turned into a road where there were only a few houses in gardens, houses of a rustic type, with whitewashed walls and slate roofs, which arrogance called villas, while proud-humility talked of them as cottages.[131]

Here, in Dulwich Road, was a 'two-storey house, the typical cottage in the suburbs of the country town,' called Chestnut Lodge. The Lodge was reached by 'a gravel walk between overgrown shrubberies'.[132] Braddon paints an old-fashioned suburban landscape 'in almost perpetual warfare against "the blacks;" not an oppressed negro race, but those wandering atoms of solidified smoke which came floating on the wing of the wind from the chimneys of Lambeth and Bermondsey.' Even the old-fashioned Laburnum Cottage can see that the canal and 'a conglomeration of roofs, melting away into the thickness of the London smoke' are encroaching on this suburban idyll. Writing from Richmond, Braddon surmises that 'South-Lane, Camberwell, is one of those places which progress has doubtless eradicated':

> Progress means building land at £2,000 an acre, houses in serried ranks, close as a square of infantry, mere packing-cases set on end, with just as much garden to each as would serve as drying-ground for half-a-dozen pocket handkerchiefs.[133]

George Gissing's *In the Year of the Jubilee* illustrated late nineteenth-century clerks' culture in Camberwell as well as the social impact of great public spectacles suggested by the book's title. Like Braddon's Camberwell of the early 1850s, Gissing's suburb was also 'historical', but had, by 1887, lost its battle with the more unpleasant effects of modernity. Though Gissing is best known for his biting portrayals of lower middle-class social climbing, he was not averse to the odd dig at its elderly relation: upper middle-class respectability. In the opening paragraphs of *In the Year of the Jubilee* (1894) he sketched the class and social character of the exclusive De

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[130]*Ibid.*, pp. 15, 31, 280.

[131]Braddon, *A Lost Eden*, 1904, p. 5.

[132]*Ibid.*, pp. 5, 16.

[133]*Ibid.*, p. 5.

Crespigny Park, (built upon the estate of Dr. Lettsom's neighbours, the Champion de Crespignys) as he found it expressed in greenery and 'buff brick':

> It was a house in De Crespigny Park; unattached, double-fronted, with half sunk basement, and a flight of steps to the stucco pillars at the entrance. De Crespigny Park, a thoroughfare connecting Grove Lane, Camberwell, with Denmark Hill, presents a double row of similar dwellings; its clean breadth, with foliage of trees and shrubs in front gardens, make it pleasant to the eye that finds pleasure in suburban London. In point of respectability, it has claims only to be appreciated by the ambitious middle-class of Camberwell. Each house seems to remind its neighbour, with all the complacence expressible in buff brick, that in this locality lodgings are *not* to be let.[134]

After a description of the surrounding area which, incidentally, tallies quite precisely with the less elegantly-worded but exacting assessment of the 1897/8 Booth report on Camberwell,[135] Gissing concluded that 'it is a neighbourhood in decay, a bit of London which does not keep pace with the times.'[136] Charles Booth's report on the area noted the number of large, detached villas 'getting past their best days, but still in single occupancy'. The majority of these were colour-coded red to indicate a high level of comfort and occupied by 'Middle class. Well-to-do' families. Less than ten years earlier, however, Booth's original map of 1887, had styled these residences as yellow, that is occupied by the 'Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy' and at the top of his scale.[137] But this part of Camberwell was described by Gissing in 1894 as decaying not just because it was neglected, indeed he has just sketched its salubrious 'aristocratic seclusion', but because it represented, to Gissing at least, an anathema in the modern age of 1887, in which year the book was set: an elegant Georgian facade conceals the three idle daughters of a Camberwell builder. On his death his daughters, (Beatrice, a postal service worker and Fanny, a florists' assistant) renounce their modern positions and join their sister Ada and her husband, a junior partner in a disinfectant manufacturers to live in petty luxury at De Crespigny Park.[138] Together these four

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[134]George Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894; Everyman, 1994), p. 5.

[135]Steele, (ed.), *Booth Notebooks*, pp. 182-183.

[136]Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894), p. 16.

[137]Steele, (ed.), *Booth Notebooks*, pp. 182-183.

[138]Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894), p. 8.

people are the sum of all that is rotten in the state of Denmark Hill, obscured if not by architectural grace, then the pretty lime trees which lined the road.[139]

'Jubilee' Camberwell was an area connected to the West End and the City by omnibus, tram and, as H. J. Dyos reminds us, by foot. His historical geography of this 'Victorian suburb' notes that Camberwell's being only a mile and a half from the City at its nearest point encouraged 'the 200,000 walkers who were reckoned to file daily into the City along the principal roads in the 1850s'.[140] These thousands of lower middle-class pedestrian commuters had a very different perspective of the homes and gardens which they passed every day on the way to their place of work, as Gissing well knew. Although better off travellers literally rose above the baser levels of society and commanded excellent views of supposedly private space from their carriages, those who moved about the city in buses, trams and on foot were not excluded from garden-watching, but gained instead a different perspective (figs. 3.21 and 3.22). With the coming of the railways those suburban gardens became visible to travellers from yet another vantage point (fig. 3.20). For perhaps the first time, the most private aspects of the garden were visible collectively, each measurable against its neighbour, from the embankments which rose from the market gardens and brickfields of the previous suburban landscape. In those suburban houses not enclosed by 'grounds', front gardens and not the back plots were designed expressly for the public domain. These were the spaces assessed by pedestrian social reformers in order to indicate inhabitants' standard of living.

Charles Booth commissioned police forces to research on foot the condition of the streets of London on their beats. As they were judging social class and character mainly from the domestic *exterior*, gardens made up a significant part of the assessment criteria. Camberwell's gardens included everything from 'Cement court[s], all doors

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[139]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

[140]H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb, a Study of the Growth of Camberwell*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1961; 1966), p. 69.

open very rough',[141] and 'Small front gardens, cared for and some full of flowers, others bare'[142], to 'small forecourts with shrubs'[143] on the one hand; and '2-st cottages with not forecourts but real gardens. A small oasis',[144] 'a new neighbourhood [...] modern houses, with bay windows, forecourts, tiled paths [where] everything is clean and eminently respectable,'[145] on the other. The author James Kenward remembered how callers and visitors would assess the suburban houses of Grove Park, just south of Camberwell, in just this way.[146] Booth's research methods were only a formalised version of what most callers did automatically, later legitimised by the title of Social Science. While visitors granted access to a house and its back garden were inundated with a wealth of information with which to compute social and economic status, the caller's inventory of social signifiers was naturally more limited. 'The caller is restricted to the front, where he may guess at the family secrets, if he is shrewd, from the type of rose trees, the straightness or curve of the path'.[147]

Not all houses, even suburban ones, could boast of a front garden with space for a path and a rose tree. Many had little more than a tiny forecourt, and others opened directly onto the street. Where the houses were 'flush with the forecourt' or even the pavement, a situation usually incompatible with respectability, other indicators of care, like a tiled step or porch, were sought. Litter, broken windows, dirty, torn curtains, and open doors were the built equivalent of empty stomachs, ragged clothes, and bare feet accompanied, often, by drunkenness, prostitution and crime. The opposite conditions were reflected in the 'China pots, lace curtains and venetian blinds [...] prominent in the front windows';[148] or the '[c]lean windows, flowers, many doors

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[141]Jess Steel (ed.), *The Streets of London, the Booth Notebooks: South East*, (Deptford Forum, 1997), p. 130.

[142]*Booth Notebooks*, 1997, p. 129.

[143]*Ibid.*, p. 140.

[144]*Ibid.*, p. 90.

[145]*Ibid.*, p. 151.

[146]James Kenward, *The Suburban Child*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 111.

[147]Kenward, *Suburban Child*, 1955, p. 111.

[148]*Booth Notebooks*, 1997, p. 126.

shut';[149] the '2-st creeper-covered houses with front gardens, neat quiet, many flowers';[150] and 'creepers and signs of care in some of the houses'.[151] Care and attention to the exterior of the home were clearly a measure of one's personal morals and propriety. Neat gardens and new bay windows spoke of domestic order, cleanliness, light and air. Ironically, the blinds, curtains and plants at the windows told of a desire for domestic privacy with which the window arrangements themselves, interfered. 'Struggling pots and tins of flowers at the windows',[152] or '[b]rave show of flowers in boxes'[153] told of the same pride and desire, but in the face of crippling poverty.

The recurrence of these same items in the reports, along with more obvious factors in the poverty equation such as a house's semi-detached or detached status, the colour of its brick, or whether the road was tree-lined, is remarkable, even assuming Booth had instructed his researchers to watch for them. The researchers did, however, make a note of house exteriors which contradicted the expected state of the home within, indicating that these were the exception rather than the rule. One researcher was reserved in his judgement of a street in New Cross, for instance, and '"should not call these respectable" because the "People have improved their homes but not their manners".'[154] Another recorded a street of two storey houses as '[f]lagged. Attempts at cleanliness: door fronts whitened, outsides done up, "but better to have minded the insides" said one informant'.[155] Similarly, a 'not very poor' court in Lambeth, was reported as '[l]ook[ing] quiet and clean, great array of flowers under wire netting at one house, but [Sergeant] Saltmarshe said it was noted for family rows, "fathers fight their

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[149]*Ibid.*, p. 33.

[150]*Ibid.*, p. 131.

[151]*Ibid.*, p. 104.

[152]*Ibid.*, p. 131.

[153]*Ibid.*, p. 38.

[154]*Ibid.*, p. 147.

[155]*Ibid.*, p. 121.

sons of a Saturday night". Birdcages.'[156] Unlike the other domestic goods invested with personal pride commonly displayed by the middle classes and respectable poor in their '[b]ay windows with flowers or ornaments, venetian blinds',[157] such as potted ferns, vases, and paraffin lamps, birdcages were more commonly recorded in the broken-windowed homes of some of the worst areas of degradation and squalor.

The sorts of trees planted in a road were more than incidental as popular names for middle-class addresses. Names such as Acacia Avenue, Linden Grove, and Elm Park indicated particular degrees of social status as well a more general air of green and restful seclusion. Public planting was a calculated indicator of wealth and status, at least for the period when villas were planned and trees planted. The Booth reports indicate that the existence of any trees was exceptional in all but the most salubrious of suburbs of South-East London. According to Dyos' survey of Victorian Camberwell, there were 'Planes and horse chestnuts for the wide avenues and lofty mansions of the well-to-do; limes and acacias for the middle incomes; unadorned macadam for the wage earners.'[158] Later in the century it became fashionable to name individual houses after trees, though the species seem more random, perhaps because of the uniform introduction of house numbers by the Post Office. A pillar of the lower-middle classes, the novelist W. Pett Ridge gave an example of this in *Outside the Radius, Stories of a London Suburb* (1899).

> We still retain our titles. The early numbers went on conventional lines, and called themselves for no great reason The Firs, The Oaks, The Elms, The Beeches; these being exhausted, there came turmoil of the mind and the summoning of daring conceit. Thus you have Plas-Newydellin [...] La Maisonette [...] Beau Rivage; Ben Nevis, Beethoven Villa, St. Moritz.[159]

However fixed these external plantings, or however limited the range of acceptable house names, inhabitants might choose to tell other stories about themselves within the pale. In the Crescent, built about 1886, Pett Ridge tells us that

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[156]*Ibid.*, p. 21.

[157]*Ibid.*, p. 143.

[158]Dyos, *Victorian Suburb*, 1966, p. 188.

[159]Pett Ridge, *Outside the Radius, Stories of a London Suburb*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1899), p. 6.

> Every house has its front lawn, which is not perhaps so much a lawn as a rather large sod of turf; green iron railings with lead ornaments (which young Mohawks from the Old Town and the riverside loot on dark evenings, and take home, I assume, to decorate their room ...)[160]

There was also 'a tessellated pavement leading from the gate to the front door, a suggestion of a porch.'[161] And behind the curtains (lace in summer; dark in winter), in the windows there occurred 'here and there attempts in the direction of individuality, and of these I give you a full inventory:'

> Bamboo stands with ferns in giant eggshells. Webster's Dictionary. A stuffed cockatoo. St. Paul's Cathedral in white wax. Bust of the late Mr. Spurgeon. Photograph of Her Majesty. The Three Graces under a glass shade.[162]

This imaginary but typical resident displays his aestheticism, eclecticism, desire for self-improvement, Nonconformity and monarchism as well as the desire for decoration seen from outside and within. In the evenings before bed-time, 'householders with a common interest in roses and of similar tastes in lawns discuss progress [...] Encouragement is given by the content of jugs and watering cans to nervous plants, who drink thirstily and bear themselves with a more jaunty air.'[163] In the back garden, on the other hand, the 'square billiard-table of a lawn at the back' was the place for more private displays.[164]

Outside the Radius: 'Suburban' Gardens in Kent, Essex, and Surrey.

Gardens could also express the identity of their owners by what they excluded, consciously or otherwise. We have seen how one novelist light-heartedly inferred his suburban neighbour's Baptist leanings from the bust of Spurgeon. Dickens' 'Seven Sketches from our Parish' (first published 1835) was a wry but affectionate portrait of his family neighbourhood in the naval suburb of Chatham between 1817 and 1822.

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[160]Pett Ridge, *Outside the Radius*, 1899, p. 4

[161]*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

[162]*Ibid.*, p. 5.

[163]*Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

[164]*Ibid.*, p. 155.

'Our parish' it began, 'is a suburban one' and the oldest and most respected resident, the eponymous Old Lady of the chapter, 'lives in a neat row of houses in the most airy and pleasant part of it'.[165] She is neither Evangelical nor Low Church, Dickens tells us, but she is decidedly religious and usually charitable. Next door is a naval officer on half-pay, who smokes in his front court, and whose 'bluff and unceremonious behaviour disturbs the old lady's domestic economy'. In line with his being a 'being a determined opponent of the constituted authorities, whoever they may chance to be', 'nothing delights him better than to experamentalize on the old lady's property', which was otherwise a 'perfect picture of quiet neatness'. 'One morning he got up early, and planted three or four roots of full-grown marigolds in every bed in her front garden, to the inconceivable astonishment of the old lady.'[166] Although Dickens noted that 'we are very fond of speculating as we walk through a street, on the character and pursuits of the people who inhabit it; and nothing so materially assists us in these speculations as the appearance of house doors',[167] his speculations were equally assisted by front gardens. A 'little piece of enclosed dust in front of the house, with a cinder-path leading up to the front door, and open rain-water butt on one side' more than spoke for itself: 'it seemed that the husband had been transported a few weeks before'.[168] Ellen Hall (1822-1911) and her relatives often toured the suburbs on the fringes of Surrey and Kent, visiting landmarks like Dulwich Picture Gallery, Beulah Spa and Norwood Cemetery; her sister Emily wrote her own guide books. They were daughters of a liberal, Low Church family involved with the Sunday School, soup-kitchens and other philanthropic works. Like most women of the time Ellen had kept a diary from childhood. An entry for 1860, when she was 38, noted delightedly how notions of what was appropriate in one's garden varied widely. Travelling through Kent,

> We drove to Charlton, a village beyond Blackheath and close to Woolwich, and into [...] very pretty grounds [...] The place was formerly occupied by the Countess of Buckinghamshire, I believe,

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[165]Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, (1839; Penguin Classics, 1995), p. 26

[166]Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, (1839), pp. 26, 28.

[167]*Ibid.*, p. 58.

[168]*Ibid.*, pp. 47, 49.

> who kept seven gardeners [...] Now it is occupied by folks who don't pride themselves on keeping it in the same good order, being that they would consider such things mere vanities and frivolities [...] they are flaming red-hot Evangelicals, the very red-hottest I have ever seen.[169]

In *Beyond the City, the Idyll of a Suburb* (1912) another favourite of the lower-middle classes, Arthur Conan Doyle, noted that individual gardens betrayed not only their maker's taste but the length of their residence. Set in the last years of the nineteenth century, *Beyond the City* documented how 'field by field the estate of old Mr. Williams had been sold to the speculative builder'.[170] Conan Doyle's view of suburban modernity was refreshingly at odds with that expressed by the majority of his contemporaries,[171] even when it replaced 'the country'.

> The Cottage from the window of which the Misses Williams had looked out stands, and had stood for many a year in that pleasant suburban district which lies between Norwood, Anerley, and Forest Hill. Long before there had been a thought of a township there, when the metropolis was still a distant thing, old Mr. Williams had inhabited "The Brambles," as the little house was called, and had owned all the fields about it.[172]

Mr. Williams' elderly daughters now occupied the cottage with its 'trim garden' and 'creeper-covered windows'. Both the modern star-shaped flower-bed and the contrasting old-fashioned cottage serve to highlight the exciting modernity of the landscape emerging before them.

> The open window looked out upon a sloping lawn, well-trimmed and pleasant, with its fuzzy rose bushes and a star-shaped bed of [-their namesake -] Sweet-William. It was bounded by a low wooden fence, which screened it off from a broad modern new metalled road. At either side of this road were three large detached deep-bodied villas with peaky eaves and small wooden balconies, each standing in its own little square of grass and flowers. All three were equally new, but numbers one and two were curtained and sedate with a human sociable look to them; while number three, with

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[169]O. A. Sherrard, *Two Victorian Girls, with Extracts from the Hall Diaries*, edited by A. R. Mills, (Frederick Muller Ltd., 1966), pp. 252-253.

[170]Arthur Conan Doyle, *Beyond the City, the Idyll of a Suburb*, (Everett & Co. Ltd., 1912), p. 8.

[171]For a discussion of literary reactions to the 'despoilment' of the country by suburban development and culture see John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, (Faber & Faber, 1992), especially Part One, Chapter Three, 'The suburbs and the clerks', pp. 46-70.

[172]Conan Doyle, *Beyond the City*, 1912, p. 7.

> yawning door and unkempt garden, had apparently only just received its furniture and made itself ready for its occupants.[173]

Although the 'City had thrown out a long brick-feeler here and there, curving, extending, and coalescing, until at last the little cottages had been gripped round by these red tentacles', the cottages were not obliterated or usurped but '*absorbed* to make room for the modern villa'.[174] Instead of being poisoned by the usual descriptions of 'serried ranks' and 'brick-bounded traps', the farmer's fields 'had *borne rich crops of snug suburban dwellings*, arranged in curving crescents and tree-lined avenues'.[175] The 'beautifully-smooth' and 'tree-lined peaceful avenues of Norwood' presented a spiritual corrective to the demoralising 'Babel of the City'; and the 'sweet-refined home-atmosphere', a necessary antidote to the 'sordid aims and base ambitions' of Throgmorton Street.[176] In fact, as one political commentator remarked at the time, 'the life of the suburb may do for the town artisan in the future what it has already done for the clerk'; for the 'suburb-dweller [...] it is a "way of life" which is reasonably healthy and natural. His horizon is not limited by walls of brick and stone.' For 'the mass of the middle and working class population, the bone and sinew of the country', then, suburban life offered health and expanded horizons of more than one sort.[177]

H. J. Dyos recognised the small domestic garden in the suburban environment as an expression of individuality and creativity at a time when suburban culture was a deeply unfashionable subject fit only for ridicule.[178] 'Within such limits [...] the occupiers themselves also had plenty of scope for little acts of symbolism, as, for example, in the furnishing of the front windows or the arrangement of the front

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[173]*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

[174]*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, emphasis mine.

[175]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

[176]*Ibid.*, p. 192.

[177]Sidney J. Low, 'The Rise of the Suburbs, a Lesson of the Census', *Contemporary Review*, 60 (10), 1891, (545-558), 554, 557.

[178]See, for example, the introduction by Sir John Summerson to the second edition of *Victorian Suburb*. Despite Dyos' objective sympathy with his subject Summerson cannot help but find it comic even from his distant viewpoint in the exclusive suburb of St. John's Wood.

garden.' This passage of Dyos' deserves citing in full. It was, for 1961, a far-sighted and sympathetic illustration of Victorian, suburban, garden design - and remains so - but it was also an accurate portrayal of those gardens as a genre. It probably owed its authority to the author's personal recollections.

> The aspidistra half-concealed by carefully draped lace curtains, the privet hedge of carefully determined height, the geometrical perfection of minute flower beds edged with London Pride, the window-box trailing with fern and periwinkle - these were some of the elements of one situation. Ivy-scaled walls, great round clumps of laurels, rhododendrons, lilac and laburnum, lawns infested with sparrows and set with pedestalled urns and gravelled drives - these were the elements of another.[179]

Ultimately, though, Dyos concluded that personal choice was conditioned by the more powerful directives of class and status; suburban gardeners were unlikely to break rank with their neighbours and introduce radically different planting schemes even had they been able imaginatively to so.

> It would be a mistake to think of these features solely in terms of personal taste. They gave scope, it is true to, for the outward expression of romantic idiosyncrasies, but they were equally emblems of different shades of respectability, some of suburbia's badges of rank, and their collective expression was a subtle acknowledgement of a locality's status in suburban society.[180]

The naturalist Richard Jefferies, writing in the early 1880s, made this point at length, and berated the uniform choice of trees and shrubs for suburban gardens. Jefferies is usually associated with Swindon but in 1877 he moved to Surbiton, Surrey, to be nearer the world of publishing. *Nature Near London* narrated his many walks in the 'verges of the metropolis'. Although his observations were concerned with villa gardens in the outer suburbs, they might equally have applied to the smaller plots of inner-suburban villadom like Camberwell, allowing for a smaller selection of cheaper plants, the horticultural 'emblems of different shades of respectability' noted by Dyos. 'Just outside London', wrote Jefferies,

> there is a circle of fine, large houses, each standing in its own grounds, highly rented, and furnished with every convenience money can supply. If any one will look at the trees and shrubs

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[179]Dyos, *Victorian Suburb*, 1966, p. 189.

[180]*Ibid.*

> growing in the grounds about such a house, chosen at random for an example, and make a list of them, he may then go round the entire circumference of Greater London, mile after mile, many days' journey, and find the list ceaselessly repeated.
>
> There are acacias, sumachs, cedar deodars, araucarias, laurels, planes, beds of rhododendrons, and so on. There are various other foreign shrubs and trees whose names have not become familiar, and then the next grounds contain exactly the same, somewhat differently arranged. Had they all been planted by Act of Parliament, the result could scarcely have been more uniform.[181]

Jefferies was primarily upset by the exclusion of 'English trees, timber trees, that [...] grew before the house was built', but he was also irritated by what he saw as villa-dwellers' complete refusal to stray from the straight path of horticultural fashion which was 'produced [...] with the expenditure of large amounts of money', when he saw about him in the woods and fields a selection of perfectly good, cheap, native alternatives. He was probably not far wrong when he wrote that 'the law is, "Plant planes, laurels, and rhododendrons; root up everything that is natural to this country."' Jefferies was only one of many writers calling for the reinstatement of 'native' species into English gardens, as we shall see in Chapters Six and Seven, and in the decade between writing his field notes and their publication, public attitudes had shifted considerably towards appreciating the qualities of natives as garden plants. Two years after Jefferies' notes were published, William Morris made a similar appeal on behalf of his nearby recreation ground, Epping Forest on the Essex fringes, which was in danger of being 'turned into a mere piece of vulgarity'. He fulminated against the 'committee of "experts" [which] has been formed to sit in judgement on Epping Forest' in a letter to the *Daily Chronicle*. Morris blamed the professionals 'whose business is to vulgarize a garden or landscape to the utmost extent that his patron's purse will allow'. The principle vandals were the 'wood bailiff, whose business is to grow timber for the market', the 'botanist whose business is to collect specimens for a botanical garden' and, above all, the 'landscape gardener':

> The hornbeam, though an interesting tree to an artist and reasonable person, is no favourite with the landscape gardener, and I very much fear that the intention of the authorities is to clear the forest of

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[181]Richard Jefferies, *Nature Near London*, (1893 facsimile edn.; John Clare Books, 1983), p. 196.

> its native trees, and to plant vile weeds like deodars and outlandish conifers instead.[182]

However, although champions of native flora undoubtedly influenced garden design in the period, the desperate tone of their pleading suggests that the taste for exotica such as planes, laurels, rhododendrons and conifers, English as these species now seem, was so firmly entrenched in both public and private suburban horticulture that it would never be entirely eradicated.

That many suburban gardeners of small means were less exacting in their back gardens seems certain. It would be unwise, however, to assume that the layout of back gardens was not subject to similar considerations of class and status which governed taste in the supposedly more public areas of the front garden. In the third chapter of Gissing's *In the Year of the Jubilee* (1894) we meet Nancy Lord who, with her father who has a warehouse on Camberwell Road, occupies a 'small and ugly dwelling in Grove Lane'. Grove Lane was geographically and socially beneath De Crespigny Park, though only a short walk away from those great heights. Nancy's own 'uneasy sense of doubtfulness as to her social position' was neatly tied up with the appearance and location of her home and with that of her father's warehouse from whence he dealt in that staple of polite, suburban, feminine culture: the piano. The warehouse in Camberwell Road - 'not a location that one would care to talk about in "cultured" circles' - was of dubious respectability, while the dealership in pianos was 'a respectable business, to be sure, but, it appeared, not lucrative enough to put her above caring how his money was made.'[183] The Lords' own garden also displayed this social ambiguity:

> The garden was but a strip of ground, bounded by walls four feet high; in the midst stood a laburnum, now heavy with golden bloom, and at the end grew a holly-bush, flanked with laurels; a border flower-bed displayed Stephen Lord's taste and industry. Nancy seated herself on a rustic bench in the shadow of the laburnum.[184]

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[182]William Morris, 'The Experts of Epping', in Asa Briggs (ed.), *William Morris: Selected Writings and Designs*, (Penguin, 1962), p. 307.

[183]Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894), p. 16-17.

[184]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

This is an accurate description of a typical late nineteenth-century suburban garden; the plants named withstood pollution, were widely available and cheap: laurel, laburnum and lilac were the rule for smaller suburban gardens in the same way that laurels, monkey-puzzle and rhododendron were the upper-class norm noted by Richard Jefferies, the same year. We also know from Gissing's diaries and letters that he worried over the correct identification of plants, his father having been a tolerably good botanist.[185] After these broad brushes of realism, however, the reader was permitted some inference. Gissing probably implied that Stephen Lord had less taste than industry when he described his garden's 'border flower-bed', because it represented the method of gardening reviled by men like William Morris.

The Lords' want of taste was also suggested in their possession of another element of the typical suburban garden: the 'rustic bench'. In spite of its evident popularity in the period (pages of advertising space were devoted to it), rustic-work of all kinds was derided by those who thought themselves above such things, especially when reproduced in urban and suburban environments. We might think that this tiny plot did not portray its status to anyone save its occupants and was not, as such, a public avowal of its makers' taste and class. But Gissing subtly demonstrates that the humdrum aspects of ordinary people's lives such as experienced in a back garden were very much open to uninvited public scrutiny. Although this garden witnessed words that could not safely be said within the home, a literary device which allowed both authors and their characters to divulge secrets 'in public' or to avoid the inference associated with obscured domestic interiors, Gissing did not grant the garden its own privacy. Initially, the garden appeared secluded even though it must be reached

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[185]See, for example, Algernon and Ellen Gissing, (eds.), *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family*, (Constable & Co. Ltd., 1927), p. 315, February 17th 1891, to Algernon: 'Alas, I would pay a man 5*s*. per day to accompany me about and name to me the trees and shrubs'; Gissing often sent plant clippings to his brother for identification in his letters. It bothered him that he was unable to identify each species on sight: April 12th 1891, to Algernon, 'I am going for a little herb-gathering but find desperate difficulty in identifying plants.' p. 317. Gissing's father, Thomas Walter Gissing, was a pharmaceutical chemist and amateur botanist. He is listed in the 'Biographical Index of British Botanists' published by the *Journal of Botany* for 1889.

through the house (in stressing that the house had no side access, being part of a terrace, Gissing reminds us that the address was 'undesirable') but one line tells us that it was both visible to and within earshot of 'the ugly house-backs' all round.

Perhaps Gissing had in mind his sister Margaret's 'bit of open garden', which he 'env[ied] prodigiously', when describing his own desire for a garden. Writing from lodgings at 29 Dorchester Place, Blandford Square, Marylebone, just west of Regent's Park, Gissing wrote to his sister in the spring of 1882, that

> the idea of being in actual possession of a few roods of the earth's surface, and those free and open for the growth of green things, is very delightful. One feels that, after years of living in two rooms of a London lodging house, without even one inch of soil to oneself, seeing that one is suspended in the air, with others dwelling below, and all around one.[186]

By way of contrast to the Lords' lowly patch, Gissing also wrote of the secluded garden grounds which abounded in the exclusive parts of Champion Hill, bordering De Crespigny Park and Grove Lane, where 'Champion Hill is a gravel by-way, overhung with trees; large houses and spacious gardens on either hand.'[187] Nancy Lord was invited yet

> reluctant to approach the big house; its imposing front made her feel that she came only on sufferance [...] Yet the place touched her curiosity and her imagination; she liked to study the curious appointments within, and to walk in the neglected but pleasant garden, quiet and secluded as if whole counties divided it from Camberwell.[188]

Nancy was out of place in this secluded garden. She was yards from her own place but whole counties away from it in status and comfort. 'The mellow sunlight, the garden odours, the warm, still air, favoured a growth of intimacy',[189] which seductive atmosphere will be familiar to readers of Trollope. Here, Nancy Lord, the 'daughter of petty tradesfolk' first met Mr. Tarrant, by whom she would soon be consumately

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[186]Algernon and Ellen Gissing, (eds.), *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family*, (Constable & Co. Ltd., 1927), p. 111. April 16th 1882, to Margaret. One rood is equal to one perch or quarter of an acre.

[187]Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894), p. 42.

[188]*Ibid.*, p. 44.

[189]Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894), p. 46.

seduced (during a bout of passionate clifftop botany), secretly wed and, ultimately, kept to her place in the remote suburb of Harrow.

Gissing's understanding of the intricate ties between social standing and physical location was recognised at the time, though most critics deplored the pornographic excesses of his realism. A reviewer of *In the Year of the Jubilee* for *The Spectator* of 9 February 1895 was typical.

> We cannot say that a single member of Mr. Gissing's group of unpleasant characters is untrue to the facts of life, as those facts may be well observed in any typical middle-class suburb, Camberwell or Peckham, Hackney or Holloway [...]
>
> His acquaintance with certain social features is hardly less intimate than that of the Greek sculptor with certain anatomical features.[190]

Gissing responded characteristically by ignoring the lewder insinuations and repeating his primary intentions. He claimed that the critics had missed the comic aspect of his more likeable characters, maintaining that '[t]he most important part of my work is that which deals with a class of young men distinctive of our time - well educated, fairly bred, but *without money*.'[191] As John Carey has shown,

> No other English novelist can provide such accuracy, because no other novelist had lived for years in the squalid lodging houses of Tottenham Court Road and Camden Town. Other writers imagine, but Gissing knows.[192]

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[190]Jon Paul Henry, 'Gissing and his Critics', in Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894), p. 377.

[191]*Ibid.*, p. 379.

[192]Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, 1992, p. 116.

4. Landscapes of Class and Snobbery: Suburban Culture and the Villa Garden.

> Look around you, East, West, North and South, and you shall see - stretching far away into what, only a few short years ago, might be fairly denominated "the country," now daily losing its last lingering *rural* trace - thousands upon thousands of dwellings, more or less ambitious in character, from the luxurious villa of the wealthy merchant to the humbler yet not altogether unassuming domicile of his plodding but not discontented clerk. Differing as these dwellings do in many respects, they all agree in one grand characteristic - the possession of a *garden*.

So wrote *Gossip for the Garden* in 1856, and concluded its July editorial: 'Thus, then, it happens that the "city man" no sooner establishes himself in his suburban residence, than his garden becomes a thing of importance, no matter how circumscribed it be.'[1]

This chapter locates the gardens created and used by an increasingly prosperous middle class of family during the nineteenth century, in their ideal home environment, the suburb. It explores the intimate relationship of the garden with suburban development historically and how representations of this garden, being one of the most visible aspects of the suburban home, were employed by diverse commentators as a kind of literary and graphic shorthand for the state of the home within. We have seen how social commentators used gardens as the outward indicators of status and propriety, morality and cleanliness. By noting the components of individual gardens and the suburb as a whole, we will see next how the practice of illustrating a 'preposterously' arranged garden to connote its concomitant attribute, the social status and poor taste of the occupants, had gained a wide currency by a variety of writers and, it would seem, their audiences: suburban villa gardeners. I will show that this characterisation was well underway by 1815 and a firmly established trope within the lexicon of class commentary by the 1840s and 1850s. Having retraced the actual form of such gardens, then, this chapter will consider at length the social constructions of suburban communities which have led subsequently to the belittling of their complex social and material cultures, and in particular, their gardens.

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[1] *Gossip for the Garden*, 1 (July), 1856, 142.

To locate the suburban garden in its historical context, the chapter begins with a summary of the evolution of the suburb in England. By way of an introduction to the discussion of the cultural roots of suburban antipathy which follows, a parallel account of the etymology of the word suburb is given. With their common origin, the genesis of the spatial and linguistic prejudices embodied in 'suburb' and 'suburban' directly informed the unfavourable accounts of suburban life and culture. Given these details, we can better reveal the historical geography of the English suburb and, most importantly, its gardens.

Next, we journey through some mid nineteenth-century suburbs north of London. Fictional and 'factual' accounts of travels from the city to the periphery demonstrated a clear interest in the emergence of a contemporary suburban landscape of villas and gardens, and of the minute differences detectable in individual suburbs. This journey leads into the suburban garden itself. Here are plotted both the categories and the social underpinning of the stereotypically suburban or parvenu middle-class home (betrayed by its garden) and the fashion in which this was manifest. Here also are shown the several categories of suburban gardens as laid down by supposedly objective horticultural and household literature - in terms of their rank, geography, size and age.

The section on 'how *not* to lay out a small garden', measures didactic journalism which guided the suburban gardener in 'appropriate' design against a humorously fictional stereotype to show how these literary traditions were mutually reinforcing. With corroborating evidence in the form of social commentary and personal reminiscence of the same areas, the section explores the extent to which these combined sources can represent the actuality of gardens on the ground.

Finally, we focus on a view of home-making and garden culture which celebrated rather than ridiculed and denigrated suburban development, on account of its civilising effect upon the landscape. In similar fashion to the way in which landscape parks had been considered as improvements upon the countryside during the eighteenth century, the cultivation of extra-municipal wastelands into recognisably domestic

spaces was also acclaimed as improvement - even when its form was disdained. We shall see that the derisory adjectives 'suburban' and 'cockney', applied in this case to villa gardeners in the urban peripheries, were reclaimed by the very people to whom they were attached. Such adjectives served a functional purpose as well as a morally and socially symbolic function. 'Suburban' and 'cockney' were titles sported with modesty if not with pride by correspondents with the nineteenth-century gardening press so that they might garner anonymously geographically and climatically specific information on how to cultivate their plots.

Those demeaning characterisations of what the urban historian H. J. Dyos affectionately called the 'suburbian' and their environment were contemporaneous not only with emergent suburbs, they continue today. Modern anatomies of the suburban environment, past and present, frequently betray more of their authors' preconceptions than the geography in question, and help to perpetuate a long tradition of defining the suburb subjectively. Of course, not all such subjective accounts of suburban life were negative, many, like Dyos' were defensive and affectionate. Most of these, however, were retrospective accounts of childhood, where the suburbs' safety and relative comfort were measured against the creeping modernity of later adult life and work. The author Thomas Burke, to take just one example, saw Clapham - the South London suburb of his late nineteenth-century childhood and adolescence - through just such a rosy glow of nostalgia; his reminiscences of this period were published as *Son of London* and dedicated 'To a London Suburb, with the Authors Love': 'In 1913 and 1914, the last years of the old and benighted though moderately sensible world in which my first twenty-seven years were spent, there was,' he said, 'a certain restlessness in the air':[2]

> As I stood in reverie in that Bond Street gallery with my eyes on that Kate Greenaway picture, and my mind on the scenes of years ago, I saw its pinks and greens dissolve into my own first box of crayons, and I saw the High Street of my suburb and its side streets, and I saw Geneva Street in springtime, and its long front gardens of nasturtium and fuchsia and mignonette, and I saw it on winter evenings when it was a little canal of twilight and street lamps and lit

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[2]Thomas Burke, *Son of London*, (Herbert Jenkins, 1948), p. 249.

> windows, with the twilight at once the soul of the scene and the spectator of it.[3]

Most writers were not so sympathetic about twilight suburban life, however, even when they were suburban-born themselves. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century suburban life and landscapes were usually painted as cultural black-spots, they were considered to be very low on the evolutionary scale of taste. The suburban garden in particular was perceived as exhibiting affectedly humorous or pathetically inappropriate designs for a small, suburban, domestic landscape. The germ of this antipathy was firmly rooted in the fears of upper-class social commentators and garden writers about what they perceived as increasingly inadequate social distinction as it was manifested environmentally. As Shirley Hibberd remarked in 1859, 'Here it is that a striking social and political feature arises out of gardening - that is, the levelling nature of it as a pursuit;'[4] *Gossip for the Garden* championed 'the great republic of Horticulture' in 1857.[5] Any latent fears about levelling and republicanism were forced nearer the surface during the 1870s Agricultural Slump and the bad-weather harvests of the 1880s: the cultivation of suburbs was now a far more profitable and predictable option than crops. A suburban estate, then, might actually lay claim to part of an aristocratic estate of a former landowner. As one architect commented provocatively in the 1970s, this was 'landowning made democratic'.[6] Tom Williamson's exploration of rural strife and the display of distinction in the late eighteenth-century landscape suggests a similar pattern to that manifest in the late nineteenth. As changing fortunes in British industry led to a refiguring of the social hierarchy, so

> questions of social definition became particularly pressing, as manufacturers and professionals thrust upwards into the ranks of gentry society and members of the local gentry increasingly sought

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[3]Burke, *Son of London*, 1948, pp. 254-255.

[4]*Floral World*, 2 (9), 1859, 198.

[5]*Gossip for the Garden*, 2 (May), 1857, 163.

[6]Nicholas Taylor, *The Village in the City*, (Maurice Temple Smith in association with *New Society*, 1973), p. 30.

> to be identified with their superiors [...] Landscapes, most visible of all artefacts, became crucial in the definition of social roles.[7]

Despite, or perhaps because of, their 'suburban village' origins in 'ordinary bourgeois style and comfort', commentators with left-wing sympathies like William Morris ignored the levelling aspect of the suburban house and garden. Instead of seeing suburbanisation as the distribution of landed property among the masses Morris interpreted it as little more than the aping of degenerate upper-class taste. The fact that intellectuals of all persuasions were increasingly vocal in their railings against the cosy image of suburban domesticity from the same period (1870-1914), epitomised by the clerk in his tiny smoke-filled villa garden, suggests that they recognised the democratic implications of lower middle-class leaseholding, and even freeholding, only too well. Morris's feelings towards the landscape of his own privileged childhood are a case in point; his 'innate socialism' did not prevent his desire for domestic exclusivity in a socially distinct neighbourhood. 'I was born at Walthamstow in Essex in March 1834,' he told a 'fellow socialist' in a letter of 1883. Walthamstow was 'a suburban village on the edge of Epping Forest, and once a pleasant place enough, but now terribly cockneyfied and choked up by the jerry-builder.'[8]

Any discussion of nineteenth-century suburban horticulture must explore the origins of that peculiarly tenacious vein of snobbery which runs through most British architectural and urban social histories and yet which has failed spectacularly in its attempts to check the spreading popularity of the suburb as the ultimate in desirable and 'homely' domestic landscapes.

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[7]Tom Williamson, 'Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England' in S. Lubar and W. D. Kingery, *History From Things: Essays on Material Culture*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1993), p. 112.

[8]William Morris 'A Rather Long-Winded Sketch of My Very Uneventful Life', 5th September 1883, in Briggs, *William Morris*, 1962, p. 29.

4.1. The Evolution of the Suburb and the Suburban.

The use of the words suburb and suburban to connote characteristics other than topography are as old as the words themselves. In English the earliest recorded uses of both the noun and its adjective are attributed to Chaucer; early dictionaries cite Shakespeare's employment of these words to confer the same meaning.[9] At this time a suburb was both a clearly identifiable place beyond the city walls or town gates and, because it lay beyond immediate surveillance and government, a liminal space for real and imagined illicit behaviour. In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century London, the Guild system prevented non-apprenticed and alien craftsmen from practising in the city; these men were granted only the 'freedom of the suburbs'.[10] This 'freedom' can be loosely interpreted from the definition of 'suburb' and 'suburban' given in *A New English Dictionary of Historical Principles* of 1919. Its two densely printed pages of literary examples give the words' meaning as 'belonging to or characteristic of the suburbs (of London) as a place of inferior, debased, and *esp.* licentious habits of life'.[11] Reflecting on an area of South London about the year 1800, Charles Dickens made the same point. However, he reasoned that members of the public were 'left entirely to the mercy of the moon and the stars', because they *awaited* the improving hand of suburban development:

> the isolated position of the suburbs, when the rage for building and the progress of improvement had not begun to connect them with the main body of the city and its environs, rendered many of them (and this in particular [Walworth]) a place of resort for the worst and most depraved characters.[12]

Correspondingly, the compiler of the *New English Dictionary of Historical Principles* does not find evidence for the secondary meaning of suburban as 'having

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[9]The listing in Samuel Johnson's *English Dictionary* (1755) appears little changed in most subsequent dictionaries which give literary examples for etymological purposes.

[10]R. J. Mitchell and M. D. R. Leys, *A History of London Life*, (1958; Penguin Books, 1963), p. 178.

[11]*A New English Dictionary of Historical Principles*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1919), p. 71. '(cf. quots. 1593, 1613 ... *freq.* in 17th cent.)'

[12]Charles Dickens, 'The Black Veil' in *Sketches by Boz*, (1839; Penguin Books, 1995), p. 433.

characteristics that are regarded as belonging especially to life in the suburbs of a city; having inferior manners, the narrowness of view, etc., attributed to residents of suburbs', until after 1800.[13] The suburbs' 'extra municipal' status, as Sidney J. Low put it, allowed for more relaxed standards of propriety and conduct than were conventionally expected in fashionable urban society. What remained common to all these senses, however, was their describing of person and place. In *The Rise of The Suburbs* (1891), Low located the beginning of respectable domestic suburbanisation about 1770. He rued the short-sightedness of the politician 'who has no place for the suburb in his programme' and 'the critic [who] sneers at the suburban view of literature and art' for demographic reasons:

> Considering that the suburban type is likely to become more and more prevalent, it is as well that we should recognise and accept it. At present we profess to be rather ashamed of it. To say that a thing is "suburban" is to many minds to condemn it at once.[14]

Looking back to his upbringing in the decade before 1914, James Kenward's reclamation of the 'suburban' in *The Suburban Child* concurred with Low's. 'The fashion for using the word "suburban" in a derogatory sense has gone on long enough [...] it is time that Suburbia's children insisted upon due honour being given to their native state.'[15] This native state was, he said, measured in terms of 'period and place, because the heart of Suburbia moved in a widening ripple. During a certain period, the ripple was at a certain place [...] Suburbians like my father moved it and moved with it',[16] because 'the heart of Suburbia is at its frontier, while its frontier goes rippling forward.'[17] Kenward also warned the historian that he 'may have some difficulty in realising that Suburbia was not only a geographical and historical state but also a state of mind'.[18]

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[13]*Dictionary of Historical Principles*, 1919, p. 71.

[14]Sidney J. Low, 'The Rise of the Suburbs, a Lesson of the Census', *Contemporary Review*, 60 (10), 1891, (545-558), 557.

[15]James Kenward, *The Suburban Child*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1955), pp. 1-2.

[16]Kenward, *Suburban Child*, 1955, p. 141.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 3.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

Although the pre- and early-modern suburb was also a 'state of mind', it can be read in almost the exact reverse of a suburb's present-day connotations of stolid respectability and peaceful conservatism. In its earlier manifestations 'suburb' designated at once the anarchic, dangerous, and debauched nature of the place and the shadowy persons who moved therein. In this sense the prefix 'sub' referred to a lower social strata of settlement in relation to the supposedly higher civility and culture of urban centres. Later, the sense of 'suburban' shifted to mean *bordering on* or *deviating slightly from* the urban as opposed to being simply beneath it.[19] At the same time, town and city centres no longer depended upon superior location as different patterns of warfare and civilisation emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, the industries and economies around which new colonies would increasingly form frequently required a valley or lowland environment. In the eighteenth century, leisure became increasingly important to the function and layout of the modern city. The many public parks, pleasure gardens, assembly rooms, arcades, theatres and race-meetings established around the centres of London and, later, other fashionable resorts, had purposes other than the social: they were venues where politics was discussed, business contracted, and marriages made.[20] As the upper-middle classes began to acquire houses with large gardens in the distant suburbs, and as some of the entertainments were to follow them, the many functions of leisure for polite and fashionable society during the nineteenth century were undertaken away from the 'public' spaces of the Court, the Bar, the Bank, and Parliament (where London and country met), in the supposedly more 'private' areas of the suburbs. In the two hundred years or so between the beginnings of proto-industrialisation in the seventeenth century and the industrialised city of the first quarter of the nineteenth, the nature of English suburbanisation changed in two fundamental ways. On the one hand the status of the suburb was elevated socially and on the other it was increasingly

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[19]*Chambers Dictionary*, (Cambridge: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 1714.

[20]See, for example, Mark Girouard, *Cities and People*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 185-186.

elevated physically. It was also, importantly, no longer primarily associated with London.[21]

Prior to our period, suburban migration by the better-off merchant and established middle classes was typically measured upwards rather than outwards. And, although there were never enough elevated spots to accommodate the numbers of merchants desiring a lofty situation for the family retreat, there was, by 1800, an established culture of respectable living beyond the city which we would recognise today as suburban.[22] The poor and dispossessed who had formerly existed beyond the city boundaries as outcasts were more and more drawn to the urban core to fuel the needs of modern industrial capitalism, while their employers, the well-to-do factors and financiers, increasingly desired to rise above the baser aspects of urban living and, geography permitting, would up and head for the hills. Around any town or city with a flourishing economy during the sixteen and seventeen hundreds, detached houses appeared upon the loftier slopes overlooking the valley. From this vantage point factors and other capitalists who made their money from the town's industry, especially if that depended, like most, upon water power, were frequently able to observe the means of their success. Conversation pieces painted of such men and their families in this period (1780s to 1840s), frequently depicted them at home in their landscaped environment, with the symbols of their success, such as factory chimneys, the mill on the weir, at work in the background. These emblems of industry were often balanced by those of piety: a church steeple signified as a measure of the subjects' Protestant diligence. By the time of Victoria's accession, clusters of similar households could be found around towns and cities all over Britain, with the result that the landscape became less rural and the majority of new houses were increasingly modest in size. Writing in the 1840s, for example, Frederick Engels observed typical examples of 'gardens and

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[21]Girouard, *Cities and People*, 1985, p. 257-270.

[22]See Mitchell and Leys, *A History of London Life*, 1963, pp. 69-72, 203-205, 282-184. For a discussion of early suburban development and architecture in London see Caroline Knight, 'The Irish in London: Post-Restoration Suburban Houses', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies: the Journal of the Irish Georgian Society*, 1, 1998, (60-83).

houses of the manufacturers [...] scattered like villas'[23] around northern manufacturing towns. In Lancashire he found residential colonies of 'the middle-bourgeoisie in regularly laid out streets'. The upper-bourgeoisie he discovered in 'remoter villas with gardens in Chorlton and Ardwick, or on the breezy heights of Cheetham Hill, Broughton and Pendleton, in free wholesome country air, in fine comfortable homes, passed once every half or quarter hour by omnibuses going into the city.'[24] Entering the town from its suburbs this time, Engels found a similar pattern at Stalybridge. 'In coming over the hill from Ashton, the traveller has, at the top, both right and left, fine large gardens with superb villa-like houses in their midst'.[25] London, too, was an industrial city in the nineteenth century and, in spite of its service and leisure industries, had an industrial base similar to those of Manchester, Preston and Leeds in the North of England.[26] Hence, although London had an earlier tradition of mercantile suburbanism, we should not treat its northern variety too differently. Regardless of the economics which made it possible, the motives for suburban migration were usually the same: desire for space, clean air, and privacy in areas neither too urban nor, just as importantly, too rural.

These first waves of outer suburban development ultimately became victims of their own success. As populations grew and the social and physiological benefits of living beyond the city limits became increasingly apparent, so the hitherto scattered collection of solitary villas was embraced by a more cohesive suburban community, bound together by services such as better roads and sewerage as well as the possibilities for social intercourse which proximity to neighbours, schools and churches invited.[27] Inevitably such modernising processes removed the semi-rural

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[23]Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, (1882; Grafton Books, 1969; 1986 edn.), p. 76.

[24]Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, (1882), p. 79.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 77.

[26]See Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, (1994; Penguin Books, 1996), pp. 186-187.

[27]The mutual benefits to be had from more socially organised suburban living varied, and were often based on private subscription. See F. H. W. Shepherd, (ed.), *Survey of London*, (26), 'Parish of St.

status of the early suburban pioneer developments whose more extensive and isolated estates were enveloped if not obliterated by successive settlers of the landscape.

Although improved transportation to more distant and less expensive areas enabled greater numbers of the less wealthy middle classes to participate in suburban migration during the nineteenth century, the primary reason for the ongoing colonisation of areas horizontally peripheral to urban centres was pressure upon available land. All the immediately desirable elevated sites had simply been snapped up. Thus the changing direction of suburban development in this case was governed less by social change than lack of choice: popular and scientific belief that all disease was airborne and specifically associated with 'stink' was sustained well into the nineteenth century, despite scientific proof to the contrary.[28] Hence distant suburban migration could be explained in terms of health, away from the sources of poisonous effluvia, rather than desperation. Would-be suburban settlers proved very accommodating however, and happily agreed to live in homes described by creative advertisers as being situated upon 'rising ground' as opposed to the 'lofty heights' of their forebears, even in the less salubrious areas then being drained and developed. In the nineteenth century much was made of the discrepancies between auctioneers' and developers' notices and the homes they purported to describe. This was true of fiction as well as the reporting press. Trollope's Dr. Bold invested the small fortune amassed as a physician in property; his house was among the 'a moiety of the new row of genteel villas (*so called* in the advertisement) built outside the town' some time before

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Mary Lambeth, (2) Southern Area', (University of London, Athlone Press, LCC, 1956; 1979 edn.), p. 3. Between 1800 and 1850, for instance, locally arranged subscription paid for lighting the road between Herne Hill and Dulwich in a new suburb of South London. Private subscription could also preserve precious open space, even where it chose not to retain its rural atmosphere. *Survey of London*, (26), 'St. Mary, Lambeth', p. 20. As the southern London suburbs were becoming ever more heavily built up, private subscription reserved some 241 acres of land for Brockwell, Vauxhall, Ruskin and Norwood public parks and gardens between 1890 and 1911.

[28]See for example, R. Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, 'Plant Effluvia. Changing Notions of the Effects of Plant Exhalations on Human Health in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Journal of Garden History*, 7 (2), 1988, (176-185), 177-178.

1850. 'To one of these Dr. Bold retired to spend the evening of his life, and to die'.[29] In Emily Eden's *The Semi-Detached House* of 1860, the narrator noted that 'in all the suburbs of London [...] semi-detached houses [were] *called by auctioneers "small and elegant,"* [and] terraces described as first rate dwellings'.[30] The *Floral World* was more scornful:

> There are, in the vicinity of London, as well as in that of our large provincial towns, along the main roads and their collateral branches, an immense number of houses, detached and semi-detached, or even when they form places and terraces, each one of which has its own particular slip of ground attached, which courtesy as well as well as the high-flown language of auctioneers and house-agents, describes as a large, productive garden. In a very great majority of these, their respective occupants spend a great deal of their leisure time, and not unfrequently a great deal of their spare cash in the shape of wages to journeymen gardeners, and florists and seedsmen, in the attempt to obtain some sort of produce, either ornamental or useful.[31]

That 'which courtesy as well as well as the high-flown language of auctioneers and house-agents, describes as a large, productive garden' was very often untreated marsh or brickfield. This was perhaps most pronounced in London, being rather two cities and a collection of hamlets and villages whose varied topography frustrated the universal preference of the early upper-middle classes for elevated residences in spacious gardens.

London also boasted a tradition of respectable inner-suburban living where the well-heeled had tended to cluster about the estates of the aristocracy, a move that was, in general, westward-bound from the early-seventeenth century.[32] Exceptions to this westward rule tended to occur when prosperous Nonconformist communities settled around their industries and places of worship.[33] The suburban expansion of London

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[29]Anthony Trollope, *The Warden*, (1855; Wordsworth, 1994), p. 13, emphasis mine.

[30]Eden, *Semi-Detached House*, (1860), p. 244, emphasis mine.

[31]*Floral World*, 1 (5), 1858, 103.

[32]See, for example, Girouard, *Cities and People*, 1985, pp. 224-225.

[33]The development of the Mile End New Town in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green, areas colonised by Huguenot refugees and made wealthy through the luxury textile market, just to the east of the City of London, during the early eighteenth century were a case in point. See F. H. W. Shepherd, (ed.), *Survey of London*, (27), 'Spitalfields and Mile End New Town. The Parishes of Christ Church and All Saints', (University of London Athlone Press, LCC, 1957), pp. 1-10.

was never a uniform affair of neatly concentric circles of building but a series of often attenuated suburbs clustered around multiple, more or less urban, centres, with the gardens slotted in accordingly. By 1900, however, 'Suburbia had become a civilisation of its own'. In Roy Porter's words, 'Suburbia marked the end of the old London and the birth of the new. It was a radical departure, the moment when, for hundreds of thousands, the allure of urban living finally faded'. Now that the suburban ball was rolling, 'the centrifugal force would not stop, for it was propelled by the pressure of private capital seeking profitable outlets.'[34]

'Suburban growth,' then, 'was one great feature of the nineteenth century' but it 'was not a nineteenth-century discovery. It was as old as the city itself. But time brought metamorphoses.'[35] These metamorphoses may be judged from the newly accelerated speed and extent of suburban development during the nineteenth century, and in the shape of the suburbs themselves. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century exercises in suburban community building such as the spectacular terraces built at Bayswater, Belgravia and Regent's Park, had incorporated adjacent parks and gardens into their prospects to give the illusion of grand mansions in large grounds. In the period between 1825 and 1840, however, speculative builders and their prospective clients demonstrated an increasing preference for semi-detached and detached villas in their own gardens. With that natural propensity to reject the material and cultural characteristics of one's forebears, Victorians considered late Georgian and Regency domestic architecture overly formal, grandiose and generally unsuited to a temperate domestic life-style. At the same time, suburban homes from this period were usually intended as the sole dwelling place for a middle-class family of moderate means. Typically, only the wealthy middle and upper classes had traditionally maintained both a country estate and a town house, (which in any case was often leased for the season); and even these classes were beginning to favour the idea of a large villa in the outer

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[34]Porter, *London: A Social History*, 1996, pp. 235, 236.

[35]Waller, P. J., *Town, City and Nation, England 1850-1914*, (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1983), p. 145.

suburbs especially, after about 1830, they became more easily accessible because of better roads and transport.[36] The new suburban home made a virtue of urban proximity *and* near-rural seclusion afforded by large gardens and the seemingly annexed open land which was verging on, or in the country. However, the increasing preference for semi-detached villas instead of terraces was not only the result of social change. As Donald Olson explains,

> the cost of undeveloped building land on the outskirts of English towns had roughly tripled between 1740 and 1820. In London it reached a peak in 1825, fell sharply at the end of that year - by more than a third - and remained at that new level until at least 1939.[37]

Hence, '[o]ne economic explanation for the replacement of the linked terrace by the detached villa as the normal unit for middle-class housing is that it reduced the risk of a building scheme [...] Slow, piecemeal development, disastrous in a neighbourhood of squares and terraces, would be a prudent way of proceeding with a district of villas.'[38]

In spite of their individual seclusion suburban homes collectively became a more prominent feature of the landscape because of the numbers of villas being built and the ground area which they occupied. This was not lost on social commentators, whose fears for the suburbanisation of England did little to slow the developers' progress. Few areas could continue to support grounds of such scale and, where developers did not move deep into rural soil, they built on a smaller scale, which increasingly accommodated the numbers of less well-off or new middle classes desiring, and able to afford, a suburban home. As we saw in Chapter One, the mansions founded by early nineteenth-century pioneers seemed increasingly anachronistic amidst their 'homely' suburban successors. Many of these gardens were reduced for more building; mansions were divided, turned into schools and asylums. Still more were pulled down and replaced with a new generation of modern suburban villas with gardens.

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[36]See, for example, Girouard, *Cities and People*, 1985, pp. 274-276.

[37]Donald J. Olson, *The City as a Work of Art*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 22.

[38]Olson, *City as a Work of Art*, 1986, p. 23.

4.2. Snobbery and Geography: Criticisms of Suburban Culture.

By focusing upon critical representations of the villa garden between 1815 and 1914 we find a locus for examining the wider issues thrown up by unease about suburban growth in general. This unease was manifest in descriptions of the home and garden which stressed their 'suburban' or 'cockney' appearance as much as their location. These adjectives were applied to indicate that its subject was acting above his or her station which, of course, was measured in terms of social class as well as geography. This, in turn, was read from the domestic exterior. The derivation of the word cockney was contemporaneous with suburb and suburban; each term could be substituted for the other throughout the nineteenth century, particularly as a term of abuse. Both appeared in descriptions of gardens of the period and were similarly applied to denigrate the aspirant middle-class taste and consumption displayed there as well as the 'inappropriate' geographical locations where these were held to take place.

Roy Porter has noted that Cockney had originally meant a townie, a Londoner in general. Classically he was a 'spiv', a streetwise man-about-town.[39] Ben Weinreb's and Christopher Hibbert's *London Encyclopaedia* tells us that when applied to humans Cockney implied weakness of body and mind, 'particularly a weak man from a town as opposed to a tougher countryman'. Although they say that by the seventeenth century it had come to mean 'specifically, pejoratively or banteringly, a Londoner' in general, it is clear from the examples which follow that something of Cockney's earlier meanings were retained during the nineteenth century. Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1894) gave several European origins for the word: the Cockney was pampered, effete and childish, and the term applied to those 'wholly ignorant of country sports, country life, farm animals, and so on'. He, and indeed she, was also very likely ignorant of gardening (figs. 4.11 and 4.12). When 'applied to

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[39]Porter, *London: A Social History*, 1996, pp. 302-303. See also Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, (eds.), *The London Encyclopaedia*, (Macmillan, 1983; 1993 edn.), p. 192.

Londoners,' the term suggested 'rustic contempt for the debauched and turbulent town.'[40] Brewer also quoted another sense from a thirteenth-century French poem called *The Land of Cocagne* 'where the houses were made of barley-sugar and cakes, the streets paved with pastry, and the shops supplied goods without requiring money in payment'.[41]

In the nineteenth century the term 'gingerbread' was used to demean articles as 'showy but worthless'. It perhaps had a longer history than the gilt gingerbread toys sold at fairs until the 1850s and '60s.[42] 'Brummagem' was used in similar fashion to gingerbread because it referred to the cheap imitation gilt toys also sold at fairs.[43] William Morris and John Ruskin used the words Brummagem and gingerbread interchangeably to describe the sham and superfluous in much of modern life (epitomised by the products of Brummagem - Birmingham - manufacturing industry), as opposed to the honesty and solidity of pre-industrial craftsmanship supposedly revived by the Arts and Crafts movement. William Robinson, a gardening disciple of Morrisian philosophy, applied the word to 'geraniums, and calceolarias, and petunias'. 'We will not waste time upon Birmingham ware while the finest filigree work of silver is at hand'. Robinson's idea of silver filigree in the garden would have pleased Ruskin and Morris, being composed of old favourites like 'blue-bells and primroses, violets and forget-me-nots, and of spring flowers generally.'[44] The modern *Chambers Dictionary* connects 'Cockney' with roguery (from the French) and cookery (from the Latin).[45] To sum up, a cockney was an oddity, a square peg in a round hole. He was not what he seemed, in the same way that a cockney home and garden were not.

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[40]Peter Vansittart, (ed.), *London: A Literary Guide*, (John Murray Ltd., 1992), p. 140.

[41]E. Cobham Brewer, (ed.), *The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 1894, (facsimile edn., Enderby, Leics: Blitz Editions, 1993), pp. 270-271; see also *The Chambers Dictionary*, (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 1993), p. 331.

[42]Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, (1894), p. 520.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 181.

[44]William Robinson, 'Ladies' Flowers', *Floral World*, 1 (new series), (1), 1866, 18.

[45]*Chambers Dictionary*, 1993, p. 331.

A garden designated 'cockney' was similarly ill-defined. When applied to the gardener of the middle or upper classes such a designation was invariably intended contemptuously, though it might also demonstrate humorous intent. While many supposedly cockney garden features were rather fluidly interpreted, several remained consistent in garden categorisations throughout the nineteenth century. William Cobbett's cockneyfication of Moore Park, the ancient seat of Sir William Temple, seems at first perverse. The appellation was earned however, on account of the Park's new owner. The parvenu status of 'Mr. Laing, a West-India planter or merchant' was both the cause and effect of his 'cockney' garden. Cobbett's *The English Gardener* (1829) commented that the spot 'has been torn about and disfigured within the last fifty years by a succession of wine-merchants, spirit-merchants, West Indians, and God knows what else besides.'[46] Laing had turned an 'exquisitely beautiful little lawn [...] into a parcel of divers-shaped cockney-clumps planted according to the strictest rules of artificial and refined vulgarity.'[47] Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* found cockney gardens on a tour from Rouen to Fleury in France. 'A residence, which we think was called Franqueville,' he invented facetiously,

> was undergoing changes in what is called in France the English manner; and the lines and forms produced with this view, as seen from the road were such as might be from a cockney jobbing gardener, who had never been five miles from London [...] Here and there a round or an oval clump; a piece of water in the shape of the Horticultural Society's Garden; a semi-circular bridge over it; a naked road of three equal bends, as an approach to the house; a serpentine walk round the boundary of the park or paddock.[48]

Loudon's characterisation of the cockney garden has added to Cobbett's artificial clumps the presence of serpentine walks and a bridge over a piece of water in the same shape as the much criticised Horticultural Society garden. Cobbett felt similarly about the sorts of 'bridge that some stock-jobber will stick up over an artificial river in his

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[46]William Cobbett, *The English Gardener*, (1829; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 39.

[47]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (2), 1832, p. 287. Laing, being a Scots border name, was given either to indicate another reason for the garden's poor taste or invented by Cobbett to imply the owner's *nouveau* status.

[48]*Gardener's Magazine*, 4, 1829, 646.

cockney garden'.[49] As well as alluding to the aesthetics of the cockney garden, however, and the fact that its cultivation was not restricted to London, Loudon, like Cobbett, hinted that a cockney garden was so deemed because it savoured of 'trade'. The titles 'jobbing gardener' and 'stock-jobber' implied morally worthless as well as unskilled labour. As late as 1871, the Royal Horticultural Society's garden, now at South Kensington, would still be described as 'only the centre of systematic jobbery'.[50] Not for the first time, the *Gardener's Magazine* found the garden attached to the Marquess of Hertford's Villa, in Regent's Park, wanting in both design and execution. Before assailing the Marquess' designs on his garden, however, Loudon praised the little work that time and nature had already prepared for him. 'The grounds, ten or twelve acres,' he wrote in 1829, 'possess a much greater variety of surface than we would have expected, in consequence of an ancient brook [...] having [...] worn out a fine circuitous dell'. In this lovely spot, Loudon acceded that 'a walk has been very properly introduced.' His enthusiasm ended thus abruptly.

> We are sorry to say that this is the only walk we can praise. There is a serpentine one, such as would not have occasioned any surprise had it been met with in a cockney garden of the last century; we have seen such another in a modern garden but not quite so bad.[51]

An out-of-date cockney garden was in worse taste than a modern one. The serpentine walk in the 'modern garden' to which even the 'Marquis of Hertford's Villa Garden' was unfavourably compared belonged to 'small villa near Tooting'. On the fringes of London, this Surrey garden had featured in the *Magazine* as 'a gravel walk round five or six acres of grass [...] conducted in that formal serpentine manner that is seldom seen except in town gardens of the lowest class.'[52] Loudon had no time for the extravagances of the Marquess of Hertford and his damning assessment of his domestic environment as a cockney garden was nicely calculated to be as offensive as possible. All the money in the nation's coffers, Loudon implied, could not buy the Marquess

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[49]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830), p. 265.

[50]*Floral World*, 6 (10), 1871, 291.

[51]*Gardener's Magazine*, 4, 1829, 464.

[52]*Gardener's Magazine*, 3, 1828, 362.

taste. By this logic, then, a home defined as cockney was sham, a plasterboard altar to grandiose notions of one's own self-worth. Its elegant facade belied its true underpinning of novelty, impermanence and, more distasteful still, dissatisfaction with one's lot. Here was the gingerbread house of Hansel and Gretel, fatally enticing the foolhardy with short-term promises which would melt into air.[53]

Suburban or cockney by association, it was the 'newness' of these homes as much as their location which earned them their denomination as suburban. The villas' visible modernity would be all the more startling when seen against the green surrounds of the most affluent inner suburbs like Regent's Park; those developed further out in the country probably seemed even more out of sympathy with their environments. Bearing in mind that many were stuccoed, the angular newness of the new suburban houses contrasted sharply with the unmodernised farmhouses and mansions of the established owners of land. They were the built equivalent of the *faux* iced cakes displayed in the windows of the confectioner's shop. In the early part of the century new suburban homes were commonly called 'boxes' and were variously described as being of 'gingerbread', and 'pasteboard' construction. These pastry-chef and theatrical tags were applied with calculation: each smacked of insincerity and the fleeting gesture. Cobbett's and, later, Ruskin's repeated references to the inhabitants of villadom as 'clowns' and 'scene shifters' were similarly deliberate. Thomas Carlyle's version painted the environs of London as 'a congeries of plastered bandboxes' and was in much the same vein.[54] Novelists, too, enjoyed the literary effects achieved by theatrical associations. R. S. Surtees identified the occupants of the rural fringes of 1860s London by their 'clownish dress'; Dickens associated the town's peripheries with the circus at that time. Ruskin's depiction in *Modern Painters* completed the allusion. Although he was observing Italian villas, he looked to suburban London for an appropriately hideous comparison. Here he detailed 'those pitiful concretions of lime and clay which spring up in the mildewed forwardness out of the kneaded fields

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[53]Grimm's *Fairytales* were first translated into English between 1812-1822.

[54]in Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, 1981, p. 155.

about our capital - upon those thin, tottering foundationless shells of splintered wood and imitated stone'.[55] Note how he incorporated the exotic into his exposition of domestic falseness and theatrical (self) deception.

> Presently, you pass one of the much-vaunted "villas on the Brenta:" a glaring spectral shell of brick and stucco, its windows with painted architraves like picture frames, and a courtyard paved with pebbles in front of it, fenced from the high road, for magnificence' sake, with goodly posts and chains; then another of Kew Gothic, with Chinese variations, painted red and green; and a third, composed for the greater part of dead wall, with fictitious windows painted upon it, each with a pea-green blind, and classical architrave in bad perspective; and a fourth with stucco figures set on top of its garden-wall: some antique, like the kind to be seen at the corner of New Road, and some of clumsy grotesque dwarfs, with fat bodies and large boots.[56]

In the early twentieth century the town planner Lewis Mumford could still refer to the suburb as 'an asylum for the preservation of *illusion.*'[57]

Theatrical affiliations were suggestive not only of artifice, impermanence and pretension, they also alluded to the sexual ambiguity and moral impropriety induced by uncertain gender roles long associated with the stage. Garden ornaments were dismissed as 'gimcrackery' or 'sham'. Domestic 'garden houses' seem to have been associated with theatre since about 1600. John Stowe's *Survey of London* noted that these early versions of the summer house, erected in gardens on the fringes of London, were 'not so much for vse or profite, as for shewe and pleasure' and requisitioned by dramatists, for plays.[58] Aspersions cast against suburban taste persistently referred to residents' supposed addiction to superfluous and intricate trimmings. The domestic environment as a whole was frequently likened to that icon of feminine activity, the public 'tea-garden'. Cobbett complained that in Middlesex 'the buildings consist

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[55]John Ruskin, 'Stones of Venice', in *Selections from Ruskin*, 'First Series:' *1843-1860*, (George Allen, 1893), pp. 442-443.

[56]Ruskin, 'Modern Painters', in *Selections from Ruskin*, 1893, p. 36-37. 'Kew Gothic, with Chinese variations' was a reference to Sir William Chambers designs for the King's Gardens; 'stucco figures [...] at the corner of New Road' alluded to the neoclassical figures which looked out from the facades of Nash's Regent's Park terraces onto the New Road as well as the Park.

[57]Cited in Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, p. 147.

[58]Cited in Mitchell and Leys, *A History of London Life*, 1963, p. 184.

generally of tax eaters' showy, tea-garden like boxes'. When one eventually came to 'a little place called Sunning Hill' it was found to be 'a spot all made into "grounds" and gardens by tax-eaters.'[59] Hibberd found the tea-garden imitated in domestic plots all over the London suburbs by mid-century and stepped forward to 'sign for the abolition of tea gardens [in suburban districts], where such notions appear to have been picked up.'[60] Both false rusticity and overly artificial gardening were associated with the tea-garden, which functioned as something of an outdoor theatre. Patrons of the tea-garden were likely to be 'City men - young lawyers and apprentices, small shopkeepers' and their families.

Topiary, especially in its most extravagant form, was considered particularly tea-garden-like and, according to this logic, was artificial and pretentious, like the tea-gardens' customers. The 'puerilities' of topiary in the English garden caused regular offence to social commentators throughout the nineteenth century, although this criticism did nothing to curb its revival in the 'old-English garden' of the 1870s (see Chapter Seven). Charges of 'mutilation' and 'distortion' had a longer history, however, in which topiary, epitome of French absolutism, was seen as the antithesis of landscape gardening, emblem of the free and liberal government of the English nation and its people. Nineteenth-century criticism extended these 'unnatural' associations and painted the '*half-mechanical grade* of decorative "*design*" [which] *galvanise[d]* the corpse of topiary art' as industrially corrupted. Robinson described the 'fantastic clipping of living trees into the shapes of bird or beast or coffee-pot' as 'pantomimic'.[61] In its extreme form topiary produced such 'ugly frivolities' as the maze: 'The maze is not pretty as part of a home landscape or garden, and should be left for the most part to places of the public tea-garden kind'.[62] Gardens dismissed in this way often acquired adjectives borrowed from the confectionery trade as well as the tea-

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[59]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830), p. 124.

[60]Shirley Hibberd, *The Town Garden*, (Groombridge, 1855; 1859 edn.), p. 16.

[61]William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, (John Murray, 1883; 1899 edn.), pp. 340-341, emphases mine.

[62]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 348.

garden. 'Pastry-cake', 'pastry-chef' and 'pastry-work' were the terms preferred by Robinson to describe the 'genius of cretinism' which he found embodied in the Crystal Palace gardening style engineered by Joseph Paxton in the 1850s and '60s.[63] Elsewhere he condemned such flower-bedding schemes as 'earth puddings' and the horticultural equivalent of crowding 'tarts in a tray'.[64] As with the theatrical allusions, the portrayal of modern gardens as sugary seducers had an implicitly misogynistic tone, owing to women's supposed predilection for consuming such things.

An early example explicitly accredited the emulative bad taste of the merchant's highwayside retreat to the female members of his household. This caricature of a 'Cit's suburban box' and garden is cited by the art historian Diana Donald in her study of *Mr Deputy Dumpling and Family: Satirical Images of the City Merchant in Eighteenth-Century England.* Donald shows how the Cit's garden was portrayed as chock full of incongruous advertisements to his (lack of) refinement and 'gross lapses of taste as a patron of the gentlemanly arts of architecture and landscape gardening'. Here were everything from a rickety gazebo on a pole (for peering over the ridiculously high wall), and a gun-emplacement, to a battlemented privy at the foot of the garden. An engraving of 1771 entitled *A Common Council Man of Candlestick Ward, and his Wife on a Visit to Mr Deputy Dumpling - at his Modern Built Villa near Clapham*, depicts in the house and garden, as seen from the thoroughfare, a brutally-clipped exotic evergreen tree, classical pergola, Gothic tracery, and a Chinese dragon. Other such suburban 'boxes' sported a

> lawn [which] was ruthlessly shaved and trimmed, denuded of trees, but embellished with miniature serpentine walks, or "a little artificial fountain spouting water sometimes to the amazing height of four feet, in which frogs supply the want of fishes", and, if space allowed, "very curious little statues of *Harlequin* [...] *Scaramouch*, *Pierrot* and *Columbine*", which serve to remind their wives and daughters of what they have seen at the play-house".[65]

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[63]Cited in Martin Hoyles, *The Story of Gardening*, (London and Concord, Mass: Journeyman, 1991), p. 223.

[64]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, pp. 247, 39.

[65]Diana Donald, 'Mr Deputy Dumpling and Family: Satirical Images of the City Merchant in Eighteenth-Century England', *Burlington*, 131 (1040), 1989, (755-763), 759-760.

As we shall see, the judgements of eighteenth-century ideographs, with their coded warnings about the vanities and vulgarities of aspirational social climbing and pretension, were continued into the nineteenth century, when upper-class concerns about the expanding middle classes, and acute concern about the seeming fluidity of social station more widely, meant that such attitudes became entrenched, and were endlessly repeated as 'comic' sketches in the illustrated literary cultures of Dickens and Thackeray. As early as 1752 *The Connoisseur* was warning that

> We shall [soon] be able to boast of finer country seats belonging to our shopkeepers, artificers and other plebeians than the most pompous descriptions of Italy and Greece have ever recorded [...] but [...] who has ever read of a Chinese bridge belonging to a Roman pastrycook?[66]

A satire of 1825 may have suggested that 'The Cit's and their cameleon dames' were interloping with select society at Kensington Gardens,[67] but observers could still convince themselves that *they* were able to tell the parvenu from the Quality. Cobbett, meanwhile, complained that the turnpike houses 'now erected are mere painted shells, with a mistress within, who is stuck up in a place she calls a *parlour*'.[68] Within these painted shells, he concluded, there was

> a constant anxiety to make a show not warranted by the reality. The children (which is the worst part of it) are all too clever to work: they are to be gentlefolks [...] they become clerks, or some skimmy-dish or other.'[69]

Loudon's parody of the female 'cottager' as the 'citoyonelle' included both her home and her garden:

> Muslin and silken curtains, flapping through the lattice glazed window, plastic figures from the antique; and the most valuable exotic shrubs grace the little lawn; a Grecian or Gothic portico screens the front door, while the rats and sparrows are nestling in the growing thatch.[70]

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[66]Cited in Donald, *Mr Deputy Dumpling*, 1989, 760-761.

[67]In *Ibid.*, 762.

[68]William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830), p. 268, emphasis in the original.

[69]Cobbett, (1), (1830), p. 268

[70]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1829, 37.

Cottage was another word which, when attached to upwardly mobile households, implied their parvenu status. The suburban cottage was derided for being other than its name suggested: behind the modern facade was old-fashioned vermin.

Although the focus for such criticism shifted in the period between 1770 and 1914, one common feature was its very inconsistency. The inconsistent logic of Ruskin's criticism of the 'desecrated landscape' of suburban development was perfectly typical of its type. He noted that the 'gloomy rows of formalised minuteness [were] *alike without difference* and *without fellowship, as solitary as similar* -'. On the one hand, suburbs and the way of life they epitomised were accused of monotonous mimicry; on the other they were characterised by chaotic individualism. Lewis Mumford said so explicitly of upper middle-class suburbs in his *The City in History*. 'Here domesticity could flourish, forgetful of the exploitation on which so much of it was based. Here *individuality* could prosper, oblivious of the pervasive *regimentation* beyond'.[71]

Suburban settlers were charged at once with obsessive privacy and wanton display. The villa home was both a prison and a bastion of self-imposed domestic seclusion, a conviction often held in the present day. Historians' portrayal of middle-class Victorian women's incarceration in their own homes is not, in my experience, borne out by the relevant primary sources, as we shall see in Chapter Five. Villa residents were also held to display a weakness for pride in their own homes while at the same time coveting those of their neighbours and betters. Ruskin complained at length about the popularity of the suburban villa during the middle of the century.

> [T]he roots of our national greatness must be deeply cankered when they are thus loosely struck in their native ground [...] they mark the time when every man's aim is to be in some more elevated sphere than his natural one [...] when men build in the hope of leaving the places they have built.[72]

The suburban dweller was also derided as invidiously conservative and yet competitively acquisitive of novelty. For our purposes, this last tension is perhaps the

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[71]Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, (Penguin, 1961), p. 563, emphases mine.

[72]Ruskin, 'Stones of Venice', in *Selections from Ruskin*, 1893, pp. 442-3.

most interesting, because of the way it was presented in accounts of suburban garden design and consumption. Most writers did not publicly share Thomas Burke's conviction that 'Wherever there is conservatism there is "character," and our suburb bred many a character'.[73] Nor were most able to separate satisfactorily the conservative from the modern in the suburb despite the fact that the two were usually conceived to be wholly antithetical. This turn of the century suburb, and indeed all suburbs, were in fact the material expression of what has recently been termed 'suburban modernity' and 'conservative modernity' in explorations of early twentieth-century experiences of domesticity.[74] Burke appreciated the amalgamation of the modern and conservative in what he denominated 'our suburb'. And in a thinly disguised sketch of Clapham Common, he described how

> The Green, though part of London, gave a quite sharp illusion of the rural. Our suburb had on show all the public up-to-date things - trams, buses, station-cabs, music-hall, Italian Cafe, Salmon and Gluckstein, Home & Colonial Stores, Freeman, Hardy and Willis - but in its private life it was forty or fifty years behind the time. Away from the [Clapham] High Street it was not progressive, and had the air of not wanting to be.[75]

Burke also noted the coexistence of modern and conservative gardens in the South London suburbs. He saw that the character of established gardens had not changed with the arrival of neighbours and new-fangled ideas about gardening. And that these grew alongside new gardens which, in turn, did not imitate the plots of their more established neighbours in a bid for cultivating the appearance of rootedness. In Clapham, there still existed in 1900 '[w]eather-board cottages [...] long front gardens happy and unashamed of such weedy beauties as cornflowers, marigolds, nasturtiums, convolvulous, creeping-jenny and musk'.[76] He discovered that a new suburb just south of Clapham was comprised of streets of

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[73]Burke, *Son of London*, 1948, p. 54.

[74]See Deborah S. Ryan, *The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and Suburban Modernity, 1908-1951*, (unpublished PhD thesis, University of East London, 1996); and Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars*, (Routledge, 1993).

[75]Burke, *Son of London*, 1948, p. 35.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 36.

> villas of a style different from those of our own suburb, and with different flowers in the front gardens and different lamp-posts. Some of the flowers were quite new to me, but Freda, having a garden, was able to tell me their names, though as most of them were three or four syllables I forgot them a minute after.[77]

Here were different sorts of gardens cultivated for different sorts of suburban houses according to their own needs and after their own notions of fashion. Suburban gardens' appearance did not result from 'trickle down' or from 'keeping up with the Joneses' but from independent factors such as their makers' disposable incomes and leisure time, their aptitude for and interest in gardening, and their particular creative expression.

As we saw in caricature of the Cit's suburban box, graphic and literary evidence often constructed the suburban garden as a landed estate in miniature. This was partly because gardening made for an easy accusation of social climbing owing, unfairly, to its associations with the emparkment which traditionally occupied the landed elite. But it was also for the very simple reason that the garden was visible to passers-by in a way that the domestic interior was not. Put simply, the owners or makers of inappropriate or upstart suburban gardens were considered in similar fashion to the lady's maid who paraded in her mistress's cast-off gowns. The acquisition and public display of the accoutrements of a higher social class by a lower one was confusing in a society used to judging social class and moral character from appearances. Like clothing, gardening 'taste' was more easily appropriated than more obviously distinguishing social characteristics like accent and manners. Percy Fitzgerald's *London City Suburbs as they are Today* (1893) specifically conflated the sartorial and the architectural in his reading of second-hand homes possessing 'the spurious air of the country - villas that had seen better days.'[78] These were 'in that forlorn district beyond Islington', or on

> the old routes by the Old Kent Road and Westminster Bridge Road, that lead to Clapham, Camberwell, Greenwich &c. Long rows of grim, shabby-looking houses - there are cast-off or "second-hand"

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[77]*Ibid*, p. 87.

[78]Percy Fitzgerald, *London City Suburbs as they are Today*, (Leadenhall Press, 1893), p. 10.

houses, like cast-off clothes - like these dismal avenues, which seem interminable.[79]

The power afforded by new money was evident, according to satirists, in inappropriately ostentatious displays of domestic and personal attire - no matter that from these same pens came accusations of excessive privacy and seclusion. The decoration of the suburban garden, then, was, with that of the body, the manifestation of 'inappropriate taste' most likely to incur the ire of those who considered themselves above such social transgression. Central to this notion of inappropriate social behaviour was the sense of *physical* transgression that increased mobility could bring. Cobbett's conviction that 'the *facilities* which now exist of *moving human bodies from place to place* [we]re amongst the *curses* of the country, the destroyers of industry, of morals, and, of course, of happiness' was typical.[80] This mobility increased as more and more people found the means to live away from their place of paid work, facilitated by greater economic power and more reliable transport networks.

Although 'suburban' was not always the preferred term, the inference remained consistent throughout the nineteenth century. 'Suburban' summarised the complex intersection of class, occupation, aspiration, gender, and geography. Less precisely, it could also hint at the increasingly enfranchised communities of men and their families which settled in different and disparate suburban environments. In spite of their differences, these various classes of suburban community, were each knit-together by their respective respectable status (gauged from a variety of factors including head of household's occupation) and, sometimes, their religious or ethnic affiliation. All these strands converged at a point to characterise an unlanded but relatively affluent and highly visible grouping and its material culture. Although this characterisation was not always pejorative, it was rarely less than gently satirical. Difference was strongly factored into the vilification of the suburban landscape, as well as its individual gardens. Contemporary descriptions of this environment were remarkably consistently

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[79]Fitzgerald, *London City Suburbs*, 1893, pp. 157-158.

[80]William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (2), (1830), p. 31, emphases in the original.

for the whole of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth, though with some notable changes to its supposed occupancy. Quakers, Jews, expatriate Anglo-Indian merchants, cuckolds, and loose and profligate women were characters very much located by critics in the suburbs of the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the latter particularly associated with Regency degeneracy; in many ways they were hangovers from another age. The figure of the Jew and Anglo-Indian excepted, these stereotypes had all but disappeared by the time Victoria reached the throne, except in specific suburbs which could be identified by name.[81] Lambasted for its adoption of so-called French fashions by the middling sort Cobbett's suburbs - what he called the 'Cockney circuit' - were further reviled for harbouring Jews and Quakers. Quakers, 'that villainous tribe [...] *none of whom ever work*',[82] were frequently the subject of Cobbett's sniping, but Judaism bore the brunt of it. His distrust of Jews and the Society of Friends was rooted in the aptitude of both groups for banking, the reasons for which are well documented.[83] As communities they were also obligingly identifiable by their religious and sartorial habits, at least in Cobbett's lifetime.[84] His *Rural Rides* is gratuitously scattered with descriptions of Quakers as being 'as to the products of the earth, what the Jews are to gold and silver.'[85]

Fears about the Jew and the 'retired Indian's' position in England were heightened by mid-century with the appearance of new communities in both fiction and fact. Thus nabobs, East India merchants and other expatriate imperial travellers would continue to prove themselves worthy of the name parvenu. Reactionary social commentators fearful of revolutionary social change continued to offer parodies of Jewishness to signal the new wealth, civil rights and religious freedoms of all those

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[81]St. John's Wood for example, see Chapter Three.

[82]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (2), (1830), p. 75, emphases in the original.

[83]See, for example, James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).

[84]One reason why Quaker communities did not continue to feature as scapegoats for the 'ruination of the countryside' in contemporary satire was due to the increasing occurrence of marriage out of the faith and a more general secularisation of 'plain' speech and dress.

[85]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1) (1830), p. 163.

new middle classes who supposedly congregated in the suburb, well into the 1840s. After this, however, perhaps because he had become uniformly indistinguishable, suburban man in general became the satirical focus. Parodic descriptions frequently hinged upon the notion that suburban life was uncivic, and that a man in particular could not undertake his duties as a citizen in the semi-obscurity of the suburb. Lewis Mumford was still deploring better-off suburbs and the way of life they inculcated for encouraging the middle classes to shirk their social duties in 1961.[86] Hence while all social commentary on suburban life increasingly stressed its familial, domestic, and feminine nature, those who disapproved of its social exclusivity painted the suburb as enclosed, effeminate and, later, emasculatory.

Cobbett's conception of the suburban landscape was class- and gender-bound as well as ethnicised. His notion of 'a really good and nice town'; [where] everything belonging to it is *solid* and *good*', was one in which 'there are no villainous gingerbread houses running-up, and no nasty, shabby-genteel people; no women trapesing about with showy gowns and dirty necks; no Jew-looking fellows with dandy coats, dirty shirts and half heels to their shoes.'[87] As one of the most vociferous critics of the new homes appearing along the turnpike routes to London in the early nineteenth century, Cobbett was particularly irked by the fact that, as he perceived, the 'houses, gardens, grass plats and other matters to accommodate the Jews and jobbers, and the mistresses and bastards that are put out a-keeping' had been paid for with 'paper money'.[88] The unpatriotic incomes (i.e. those gleaned from imperial trade, military pensions, cotton weaving, banking and broking) allegedly enjoyed by their upstart parvenus owners further incurred his ire, while the fact that this class could never quite achieve the lifestyle they clamoured to attain appealed to his savage sense of irony. Many of his sleights against the 'stock-jobber', 'cit' and 'tax-eater' and his domestic circumstance contrasted the transient sham of the modern economic system

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[86]Mumford, *City in History*, 1961, pp. 563, 582.

[87]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (2), (1830), p. 75.

[88]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830), p. 213.

with old-fashioned paternalism. Flimsy lifestyles and landscapes (represented by costume and gardens, respectively) were bought with the first, while the latter produced happy farmers who respected the land and those it supported. He had no time for the majority of landlords and, for the same reasons, abhorred the idea of '*shops*' and 'those locusts called middle-men' who ran them.[89] Cobbett saw union of man and land as a truly English virtue. His union was untainted by the effeminate, fancy and francophile undercurrents of modern consumerism. What he saw as the transfer of urban sensibilities to the countryside was embodied in the development of the feminised house and garden of the modern villa, and its supposed supplanting of wheat, oats and barley.

Contemporary social commentary, both satirical and ostensibly objective maintained a deeply-rooted antipathy to the suburban garden, as well as to the landscape of the suburban community at large. This commentary, aided by the diffusion of a highly sophisticated print culture, conspired to present an overwhelming image of the social-climbing parvenu, with little sense, less taste and no propriety. Diana Donald has shown that such attitudes were well-established by the mid-eighteenth century and, concordant with other debates about luxury in the period, the social *faux pas* committed by the swelling speculator class in its gardens were avidly discussed but reluctantly accepted as 'only the latest manifestations of man's original vices and follies.'[90]

As usual, William Cobbett's touristic journalism captured this point precisely. His caustic accounts of the 'ridiculous' gardens bought by new money on the fringes of London during the 1820s and 1830s show that the emergent tradition of trouncing suburban gardening taste was carried into the nineteenth century. The following quotation from a *Rural Ride* between London and Burclere epitomised his opinions of the landscapes enjoyed by *nouveaux riches* newcomers to the outskirts of London. The emphases are Cobbett's own.

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[89]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (2), (1830), pp. 194-195.

[90]Donald, *Mr Deputy Dumpling*, 1989, 760.

> Came through a place called "a park" belonging to a Mr Montague, who is now abroad [...] of all the things I ever saw in my life this place is the most ridiculous. The house looks like a sort of church, in somewhat of Gothic style of building [...] By the sides of the lakes there are little flower gardens, laid out in the Dutch manner; that is to say, cut into all manner of superficial geometric figures. Here is the *grand en petit*, or mock magnificence, more complete than ever I beheld it before. Here is a *fountain*, the basin of which is not four feet over, and the water spout not exceeding the pour from a tea-pot. Here is a *bridge* over a river of which a child of four years old would clear the banks at a jump [...] In short, such fooleries I never before beheld.[91]

In short, it was the assumed social background of aspirants to new suburban living which frequently defined the place of the suburb rather than just its location on the ground. Moreover, 'suburban' and 'cockney' could and did refer to things and people having nothing to do with geographic place and everything to do with social station. On several occasions Loudon chastised Russian envoy, art collector and so-called 'caliph of Regent's Park', Francis Charles Seymour Conway, Earl of Yarmouth and later the 3rd Marquess of Hertford, for his reprehensible 'cockney' gardening example in so verdant a setting.

> Of all the situations we know of, for showing off [...] plants to advantage, the fittest is the lawn in front of the Marquess of Hertford's villa in Regent's Park. There they would not only be enjoyed by the Marquess and his friends, but at a distance by every person from the public road.
>
> We never pass his grounds and look over his fence at the common trash planted within, without regretting that the taste which he has so well displayed in architecture had not extended itself to gardening.[92]

The *Magazine* neglected to mention that the garden contained a collection of Greek marbles. Hertford Villa, designed by Decimus Burton for the Marquess (who changed its name to St. Dunstan's Villa the same year) was the largest single-occupancy domestic building, located in the north-west corner, of Regent's Park.[93] Loudon

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[91]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830), pp. 5-7.

[92]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1830, 378-379.

[93]See Peter Hughes, *The Founders of the Wallace Collection*, (Trustees of the Wallace Collection, 1981), pp. 11-23.

clearly intended Hertford, a Tory MP and confidant of the Regent, as a public example of how not to lay out a suburban garden of any class or scale.

Nearly thirty years later, the *Floral World* would note that 'the London squares [...] must remain a disgrace, the more glaring because usually associated with the substantial residences of the wealthy, who are supposed to be patrons of art and arbiters of taste.'[94] In fact, the reverse was true: nobility was neglecting its civic duties. If the upper classes had long ago ceased to set the city a moral example they were, by the early-nineteenth century, also losing their aesthetic lead. Morality had long been intertwined with aesthetics and became, in the period between 1815 and 1914, virtually indistinguishable; by definition, then, 'good' art and design also had an honourable moral worth. Increasingly, both torches would be claimed from 'below'. Like Loudon, the *Floral World* believed it was the middling classes who were setting the tone in such matters, even as it clung to the idea that the upper classes ought to be so doing:

> The public squares which ought to be examples of how such should be accomplished, are rather examples of the meanness and utter want of taste on the part of those whose duty it is to conserve them [...] If we can get individuals to take a real interest in their own limited town and suburban plots, and to manage them in a sensible and tasteful way, a visible improvement in the public squares will follow.[95]

Although the later squares' occupancy was typically middle class in make-up, the land freeholds and responsibility for their up-keep, indicated in their aristocratic names, usually belonged to the aristocracy. While there were exceptions to this line of thought, (lower middle-class gardens with no common freehold were, in particular, considered not 'quite up to the mark'), suggested remedial action did not include their emulating the gardens of the rich. An 1871 article in the *Floral World*, for example, was pleased to reflect that '[b]eautiful trees are not despised in this country' and that

> of all places in the world where beautiful trees appeared to be the best appreciated, the suburbs of London must have honourable mention. Indeed the rural surroundings of the great metropolis are

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[94]*Floral World*, 1 (3), 1858, 51.

[95]*Ibid.*, 49.

> rich in whatever money can buy and taste dispose of, and the occasional demonstrations of mere Cockneyism are swamped out [...] from the general aspects of the outdoor world.

The 'demonstrations of mere Cockneyism' referred to imply that the suburban gardener had neglected to plant trees in favour of more instantly gratifying displays of summer bedding and common-place evergreen shrubs. *Nouveaux riches* Cockney gardeners understood neither the necessity of planting for the future nor of planting for posterity: an insensitivity to nature, coupled with a transient and precarious relationship to property, was held to make cockneys poor gardeners, and the cockney suburb still poorer in taste. When the *Floral World* asked 'Where are they?' of 'the bountiful displays of high class arborescent vegetation' which supposedly 'swamped out' this treeless cockney taste, it found them not the verdant plots of the rich but 'In the Nurseries!'[96] Commercial rather than domestic economy was here held to be the chief improver in the gardens and suburbs of the metropolis. A garden may not have been geographically suburban but because it exhibited a taste in design for the domestic environment which was favoured in the villas around the city, it was suburban by association. John Carey has discussed how

> the word "suburban" is a sign for the unknowable. But "suburban" is distinctive in combining topographical with intellectual disdain. It relates human worth to habitat. The history of the word shows [...] a development in human geography that caused widespread dismay.[97]

The extent to which suburban geography was 'distinctive in combining topographical with intellectual disdain' need not concern us here: the immoral geographies of the slum or of the shambling aristocratic pile have provided ample fodder for the pens of hungry satirists and historians alike. But Professor Carey is right to isolate the suburb for special consideration. Critics of all persuasion were united in their 'widespread dismay' at the growth of an increasingly prosperous middle class with political ambition and pecuniary might.

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[96]*Floral World*, 6 (new series), (10), 1871, 289.

[97]John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, (Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 53.

We have seen how the 'suburban' commitment to family life; real and spiritual removal from poverty and squalor; and the physical removal from centres of power could invite accusations of neglect of citizenship. The peripheral citizen was shirking his civic duties in favour of a life of conspicuous consumption and leisure or caught in an endless limbo between suburban home and city office. According to literary fiction, the suburb, excepting the very young, the elderly and domestic servants (who didn't count), really *was* a no-mansland in the hours between breakfast and dinner. Novelists reckoned the religiosity of suburban life owed much to the clergyman's captive, and highly receptive, female audience. Those groups newly established in domestic enclaves on the outskirts of metropolitan society had by definition a lower social standing than either the existing lesser gentry or the respectable artisanal classes and rural peasantry who knew their place and kept to it. Such prejudice was rooted in fear of the unknown, fear of political and social upheaval and the chaos that would very likely arise from shifts in power relationships and the destruction of traditional hierarchies.

Linda Colley notes that 'male anxieties about female pretensions became markedly sharper in the second half of the eighteenth century' - the period also charted by Diana Donald. What asks Colley,

> [i]f men without land but possessed of movable property were to start campaigning for admission to the political process, as they were by the 1860s, and if some radicals were to advance further and demand universal suffrage, as they had by the 1780s, what was there to stop single or widowed, and possibly in the end, even married women seeking access to similar rights?[98]

Traditionally these were the groups who desired and indeed created suburban homes, even if they were not so deemed. Anxieties about the middle-class woman's status and the choices she exercised certainly seemed to influence perceptions of the new suburban environment: critics clearly saw her reflected there. We have seen how the *Gardener's Magazine* bemoaned the 'gaudy colours, and fantastic forms, with which some of these

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[98]Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 239.

[suburban] erections are bedizened' on the grounds that they seemed 'to be nothing more than the romantic devices of the citoyenelle'.[99] Here, in 1829, was a direct reference to the possible existence of female citizenry, even as it criticised the arrangement of woman's 'natural' place: the home. The subject of middle-class women's increasingly important role as managers of the suburban home and garden is discussed in Chapter Five.

In their groundbreaking work on the men and women of the English middle classes between 1780 and 1850, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall suggested persuasively that the settling of the countryside bordering manufacturing towns by mercantile classes was a conscious act of distancing themselves from both the working-class associations of city streets and from the traditional domain of gentry, the market town.[100] This had the effect of making the new middle classes even more visibly distinct and thus an easier target for contemporary chroniclers who feared their increasing social and pecuniary might, even as it was contained in the apparently unradical environment of the orderly home. To both old-fashioned paternalists like William Cobbett, and the newer breed of radical social reformers like Frederick Engels, this proved equally problematic. How was one to go about attacking a phenomenon which was at once politically modern and socially conservative; whose commercial, religious and philanthropic pursuits were openly paraded and yet whose domestic and family lives were fiercely guarded from public eyes? The middling groups refused any simple categorisation other than their apparent self-reliance and self-conscious but dignified separation from existing gentry and artisanal ways of life. It is no wonder that critics clutched at straws in their attempts to ridicule a class which they could neither properly define nor satisfactorily condemn. To this confusion we owe the long tradition of satirical assaults upon the suburban middle classes which have resorted to those peculiarly English forms of wit, sarcasm and clever exposing of social snobbery in others in which the author entirely fails to suppress his own.

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[99] *Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1829, 37.

[100] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (Routledge, 1989; 1994 edn.), p. 227.

If this looming middle class seemed impervious to such ridicule they were not wholly unaware of it: Donald has shown that late Georgian satirical prints in this vein were avidly consumed by the very people they sought to portray. 'For most,' conclude Davidoff and Hall, 'the domestic setting remained their ideal. Even if it entailed a move to the countryside, this was a stronger motive than the wish to control rolling acres or seek gentry approbation.' Moreover, 'their type of housing, its distribution in towns and villages, its gardens and surroundings were part of the bid for independence from traditional aristocratic dictates.'[101] An exclusive suburb such as Edgbaston, on the outskirts of Birmingham, upon which area much of Davidoff's and Hall's research is based, provided a retreat for active or retired businessmen like Jane Webb Loudon's father, Thomas Webb. Here, he and his family 'could feel comfortably free from the social exclusion he might experience in villages dominated by gentry.'[102]

4.3. Suburban Journeys

Cobbett and Loudon took us on some tours of early nineteenth-century suburban London. This section follows later tourists, both novelists and garden writers, on their journeys through the northern suburbs of mid-century London. R. S. Surtees' *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* (1853) contains one of the nicest literary journeys through these districts, in which a timetable-obsessed Mr. Sponge sets out from Oxford Street to see a horse-dealer in Scampley, a village on the rural fringes of suburban north London. As he proceeds, Sponge unconsciously absorbs the minute social distinctions apparent from the flow of domestic exteriors presenting themselves to the bus.

> Away they rumble up the Edgeware Road [sic]; the gradual emergence from the brick and mortar of London being marked as well by the telling out of the passengers as by the increasing distances between the houses. First, it is all close huddle with both. Austere iron railings guard the subterranean kitchen areas, and austere looks indicate a desire on the part of passengers to guard their own pockets; gradually little gardens usurp the places of the

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[101]Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 1994, p. 362.

[102]*Ibid.*, p. 368.

> cramped areas, and, with their humanising appearance, softer looks assume the place of frowning *anti*-swell-mob ones.
>
> Presently a glimpse of green country or of distant hills may be caught between the wider spaces of the houses, and frequent settings down increase the space between the passengers; gradually conservatories appear, and conversation strikes up; then come the exclusiveness of villas, some detached and others running out at last into real pure green fields studded with trees and picturesque pot-houses, before one of which latter a sudden wheel round and a jerk announces the journey done.[103]

Thus far, the journey appears to be nothing more than a bit of light-hearted realism. It differs little in content or tone from the recollection of a suburban journey made by Shirley Hibberd in his *Town Garden* of 1855:

> As we approach the suburbs, gardening matters look up a bit. As shop-fronts disappear, forests of green iron-spikes spring up, enclosing small plots of garden-ground in the fronts of suburban residences, where bank-clerks, thrifty traders, agents, actuaries, poor authors, and *hoc genus omne*, seek evening repose with their families, and ridicule the innate love of man for things rural by giving countenance to the labours of the gardener who calls once a fortnight to dig and rake the sour mould round the paternal laurel-tree, and shave the small lawn into a condition more smooth than green.[104]

These inner suburbs show gardeners battling against urban pollution, a place where 'overgrown box-edgings give shelter to sooty patches of London Pride and consumptive heart's-ease',[105] and where 'dingy hollies [...] stiff laurels [...] dilapidated lilacs, form [...] Arcadian retreats for cats and slugs'.[106] Only in the outer suburbs did Hibberd find more cheerful gardens.

> It is on the verge of town, where the suburban villages - such as Edgeware on the west, Bromley and Plaistow on the east, Clapton on the north, and Dulwich on the south - commence, that we find the best examples of suburban gardening.[107]

At this point in his tour, Hibberd retraced his steps and returned to Stoke Newington. Mr. Sponge continued onwards and outwards, to be 'unceremoniously turned loose upon the country'. Surtees had his character notice the changing face of the cultivated

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[103]R. S. Surtees, *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour*, 1853, (Wordsworth Edition, 1995), p. 8.

[104]Hibberd, *Town Garden*, 1859, p. x.

[105]*Ibid.*, p. xi.

[106]*Ibid.*, p. xii.

[107]Hibberd, *Town Garden*, p. xiii.

suburban landscape only to emphasise the unsettlingly unsurveillable openness of sparsely populated agricultural land. Continuing the novel's pattern of dispersing people and buildings, Scampley was reached by a one-and-a-half mile walk from the last bus stop: even modern public transport did not reach this far beyond civilisation. Yet Scampley, settled amid green fields many miles from London, was 'one of those pretty little suburban farms, peculiar to the north and northwest side of London', with 'its picturesque little buildings, consisting of small, honeysuckled, rose-entwined brick houses, with small, flat, pan-tiled roofs, and lattice windows'. Despite being possessed of all those qualities normally amounting to 'picturesqueness', and being both fertile and healthily well-drained, the author described farmhouses 'dotted about as thickly, and at such varying distances from the roads, as to look like inferior "villas" falling out of rank; most of them have a half-smart, half-seedy sort of look'. Scampley was occupied by 'rustics who [...] are neither exactly town nor country'. According to Surtees' analogy of contemporary manners with geography, the suburbs' relaxed comfort was presented as a happy medium between the rigidity of the city and the laxity of the rural fringes.

One year after *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* was published Dickens's *Hard Times* first appeared in serial form. Much of this novel was also set in 'the neutral ground upon the outskirts of the town, which was neither town nor country, and yet was either spoiled'.[108] The town, 'Coketown', which was loosely based on Preston in Lancashire, provided the character of Mr. Gradgrind with his living: first in trade and then in politics.[109] Gradgrind built himself a house and garden on this neutral ground which he shared with his family. The newness of houses put up in the suburbs was frequently exploited by satirists to expose the vulgar exhibition of new money. Amid farm land the contrast between tradition and novelty was doubly striking, even when householders sought to give the impression of having been long-established there

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[108]Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* , (1854; World's Classics, 1989), p. 13. Dickens had already stressed this town-country tension in *Dombey and Son*, 1846.

[109]Asa Briggs in *Victorian Cities* (1963; Penguin, 1968) says 'Coketown' is Oldham not Preston.

financially and socially. Begun in 1873, Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* satirised the differences between new money and old through a series of interacting characters and their domestic environements. The reader soon learns to identify the various social standing of these characters by their dress, speech, manners and habitat. Social tensions and pretensions were particularly evident in the home and garden one kept. *The Way We Live Now* contrasted the gardens of the dully honest and reliable Sir Roger Carbury, member of the minor but ancient gentry, with the extravagant grounds of the ancestrally obscure Primero family. Theirs was

> the finest house in that part of the country, but it looked as if it had been built within the last twenty years. It was surrounded by new shrubs and new lawns, by new walls and new outhouses and savoured of trade; - so at least thought Roger Carbury.[110]

We infer the same from Dickens' description of 'Mr. Gradgrind's "matter-of-fact home"' in *Hard Times*, which shared with Trollope's book some of the same landscape motifs. Dickens' Stone Lodge was 'a very *regular* feature on the face of the country'. This 'great *square* house' was possessed of 'a lawn and garden and an *infant* avenue, all *ruled straight* like a *botanical account book*.' The infant avenue betrayed Gradgrind's recent transplantation, as well its own, he 'had virtually retired from the wholesale trade' to 'a moor within a mile or two of a great town - called Coketown in a present faithful guide-book.'[111]

4.4. Passing Judgement on Suburban Garden Types.

The early London suburbs and those which would soon accompany all the major urban centres like Preston and Manchester had more in common with later Victorian models than merely their peripheral location. However, we have become so accustomed to reappropriating the word suburban to signify aesthetic sense rather than geography that pre-Victorian suburban extension is rarely recognised as such. Covent

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[110]Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, (1874; Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 105.

[111]Dickens probably intended the straight-edged garden to signal Gradgrind's obsession with order (which was considered inappropriate in the country) rather than to indicate his northern subject's refusal of contemporary horticultural fashion, see Dickens, *Hard Times*, p. 12, emphases mine.

Garden and the squares which emerged from the surrounding fields and market gardens to form Bloomsbury were suburbs just as much as were their late-Georgian successors, the brick and stucco terraces of Camberwell, Clapham and Kensington. All contained examples of what are now called Georgian *town* houses and yet each in its time was an exercise in suburban expansion upon virgin or recommissioned ground.[112] Yet these rarely receive the adverse criticism which so often accompanies historians' accounts of later suburban experiments,[113] probably because their suburban status has been obscured by the subsequent waves of more peripheral villadom.

As Todd Longstaffe-Gowan's extensive work on the London town garden between 1700 and 1830 has demonstrated,

> the terrace house - as a single family house - was by no means inimical to the germination of the suburban ethos; it was, in fact, the terrace house and garden which nurtured the evolving suburban spirit to the point where it could develop independently into the suburb.[114]

This is slightly misleading, as these terrace houses were originally West End suburbs. But his premise remains true, at least for the prosperous middle classes, that 'by the late eighteenth century a private town garden was a near universal expectation of most urban [and suburban] tenants or leaseholders'.[115] According to Gowan,

> As the garden became perceived as an instrument which contributed to the full pleasure and enjoyment of city living it became the subject of discourses which sought to define, and invariably reconcile,

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[112]At the time of building these suburbs were sometimes designated New Towns. The expansion of former hamlets into desirable residential districts often incurred this usage. Both Mile End to the east of London and Peckham south of the river had New Town suburbs developed nearby in the early-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, respectively. The former, despite its name, was actually an extension of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green. See *Survey of London*, 27, (University of London Athlone Press, LCC, 1957), pp. 3-5.

[113]See A. M. Edwards, *The Design of Suburbia: a Critical Study in Environmental History*, (Pembridge Press Ltd., 1981).

[114]Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, 'Gardening and the middle classes, 1700-1830' in Mireille Galinou (ed.), *London's Pride: the Glorious History of the Capital's Gardens*, (Anaya Publishers/Museum of London, 1990), p. 133.

[115]Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden 1700-1830, the Experience of Nature in the Eighteenth-Century City*, (unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 1990), p. 14.

aesthetic satisfaction with the needs of health, outdoor recreation and utility.[116]

The nineteenth-century suburban house and garden which together constituted the ideal home of the period consolidated the preferences and practices of the previous generation of home-makers and speculative builders. Aided by domestic manuals such as published by the Loudons a growing number of suburbians was educated in how to choose, arrange and ultimately live in the new or newly-vacant villa homes and gardens. They were distinguished from their predecessors in preferring more secluded homes, even where space proved prohibitive. Although semi-detached homes were not unknown before 1815, they began to appear in greater numbers as the century progressed. But the main difference was the villa's proliferation and greater accessibility to an expanding section of the British public. The garden had become inseparable from the suburban villa both conceptually and on the ground. It was as important to the idea of home as was the house itself.

Because this study of middle-class or suburban gardening spans the nineteenth century it has not been possible to present a typical plot in terms of size or design for the whole period. However, reasonable assumptions can be made about the areas of ground enclosing the different classes of suburban villas as they were developed over the decades. By the close of the century there was a greater, if more subtly defined, range of housing for the layers of social strata incorporated by the so-called middle classes. These strata, like the categories of living outlined by Loudon in the late 1820s, were assiduously reflected in the available range of reading material. In 1838 Loudon collated many of the articles from the *Gardener's Magazine* and published them in under the carefully titled *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion; comprising the choice of a villa residence, or a situation on which to form one, the arrangement and furnishing of the house, and the laying out of the garden and grounds*. This was 'adapted for grounds of one perch [about 1/4 acre] to fifty acres in extent and intended for the instruction of those who know little of gardening and rural affairs, and more

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[116]Longstaffe-Gowan, *Thesis*, 1990, p. 42.

particularly for the use of ladies.' Mrs. Loudon published this in completely revised form in 1850.

The first garden type listed in the 1838 edition of the *Suburban Gardener*, the Country Seat, was an aspirational model rather than a reality for the 'suburban horticulturist' (figs. 4.2). Although it was 'impossible to lay down anything like rules for execution', the country seat was important because 'such places deserve imitation, as they are examples of our national taste'.[117] The second type, the Rural Villa was a little closer to the ideal suburban home in the early-nineteenth century (fig. 4.5). Although 'these dwellings appear in the neighbourhood of country villages', they would be equally at home in the neighbourhood of small towns or a city suburb. The rural villa would be 'placed near the end of a square meadow, a little dressed ground for shrubs and flowers in front, a garden and meadow behind, surrounded by a planted walk of trees and shrubs, in a belt within the outer fence, completes the place'. Ultimately it was distinguished from its town relative by size rather than location: 'Town Villas [...] resemble the forgoing, only the house is larger, and the premises are surrounded by walls and iron palisades' to keep the encroaching streets at bay.[118] Loudon's own villa (fig. 4.1), on the fringes of Hyde Park and the Bayswater Road, was of this class, as was his friend Mrs. Lawrence's Drayton Green (fig. 4.4). As suburban expansion continued many formerly rural villas were similarly re-categorised.

Ornamental Cottages completed the four types of appropriately designed homes and gardens. These were modernised forms of the Regency cottage *orne* described in Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) (Fig. 4.3). Many of these had Gothick details in keeping with their romantic associations; 'everything [would be] as complete as possible in the country, shrubberies and flower gardens, and rustic seats innumerable,'[119] Only a few years later, the 'Cottage' began to be interpreted as

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[117]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1829, 35.

[118]*Ibid.*, 36.

[119]Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (1814; Wordsworth Editions, 1992), p. 42.

something like a villa residence but of either a lesser scale and social standing or a term of modesty. This qualification seems to have been due to the increasing numbers of 'cottages' being erected on the outskirts of towns along existing turnpike roads. These cottages were very clearly removed both geographically and aesthetically from the homes of the agricultural poor romanticised by painters such as Helen Allingham later in the period (see Chapter Seven).[120] The gardens in this pseudo-cottage class had been criticised for as long as the word cottage had been appropriated to mean a desirable residence rather than a hovel. Cobbett, approaching Cheltenham, 'one of the devouring Wens' outside London, associated the gentrification of the cottage with the modern political system, which they embodied in name and structure:

> It is curious to see the names which the vermin owners have put upon the houses here. There is a new row of most gaudy and fantastical dwelling-places [...] There is "*Liverpool Cottage*," "*Canning Cottage*," "*Peel Cottage*;" and the good of it is, that the ridiculous beasts have put the word *cottage* upon scores of houses, and some very mean and shabby houses, standing along, and making part of an unbroken street![121]

Interestingly, Cobbett offered no such opinions in *The English Gardener* (1829), for fear, perhaps, of offending his nursery customers.[122] Modern cottagers were criticised by others who professed to address their horticultural needs. Loudon noted with distaste that 'much of "this kind of thing" is done in all parts of the country. All the extravagances of fancy and whimsical conceit, are exercised in torturing costly materials into all the accidentally rude members of the poor man's hut.' After a lengthy admonishment of the ornamental cottager's want of taste Loudon, ever the canny journalist, relented:

> Notwithstanding such freaks of tasteless expenditure, it is, upon the whole, not amiss as encouraging mechanical trade, and an indication of the improving taste, however deceptive, of the country. A man

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[120]See, for example, Andrew Clayton-Payne with Brent Eliott, *Victorian Flower Gardens*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988).

[121]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (2), (1830), p. 127.

[122]Cobbett ran an arboricultural business in Kensington. Although he was an advocate of English trees he also specialised in North American species. Loudon visited the nursery of the 'veteran campaigner' as part of his 'Tours of suburban gardens' for the *Gardener's Magazine*.

> "who pleases to want" such things, and is gratified with showy plants, furniture and a conspicuous house evinces a superior intellect [...]; besides, such a fashion dresses the face of the country, and is, unquestionably a sign of national prosperity.[123]

How, then, was one to lay out the small, suburban garden appropriately?

4.5. Intricate Elements - Beds, Bridges, Battlements, Rock-Work, Rustic-Work and Winding-Walks - Or, *How* Not *To Lay Out A Small Garden.*

In this section I compare two sorts of popular garden writing published in the middle years of the nineteenth century. One described a fictional suburban garden on the Surrey side of the river, and the other was a catalogue of design 'errors' listed for the purpose of improving the taste in the laying out of a fashionable suburban garden of unspecified location. By discussing the two types of literature embodied in each text, including the ways in which they fed from each other, we shall see that each portrayed a landscape that was both an exaggerated but realistic example *and* an imaginary stereotype of the Victorian, suburban garden at a particular moment. Following a lengthy examination of these popular suburban geographies, the thoughts and memories of contemporary individuals living and gardening in comparable neighbourhoods, are introduced by way of comparison. Finally, there follows a short discussion of four aspects which held centre stage in both real gardens and anti-suburban rhetoric: rustic-work (figs. 4.6 and 4.7), standard roses (fig. 4.8), flower-beds (figs. 4.9 and 7.1-7.4) and the rockery (fig. 4.10).

Dickens frequently described gardens in his novels and was familiar with many of the leading gardeners of the day.[124] Were it not for the fact that accounts of poor gardening taste and lists of the offending components appeared so frequently in

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[123]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1829, 37.

[124]'Mr. Charles Dickens proposed the Health of the Chairman (Joseph Paxton, esq.), at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Gardeners' Benevolent Institution for the Relief of Aged and Indigent Gardeners and their Widows.' See *Illustrated London News*, June 7 1851, p. 556. Paxton was instrumental in the founding of this Institution during 1839.

horticultural and touristic journalism during the nineteenth century, it would be tempting to suggest that Dickens had composed Wemmick's garden in *Great Expectations* from the catalogue of errors laid out in Edward Kemp's *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, first published in 1850. Wemmick, a City legal clerk, made his garden in suburban Walworth, just north of Camberwell. Kemp, a professional landscape gardener, was compelled to write his book after 'Having spent a good deal of time in passing through the suburbs of large towns, (particularly the metropolis)' and been 'very much impressed with the incongruity and dulness observable in the majority of small gardens'.[125] Kemp's criticism of specific garden elements is typical of the genre of gardening books catering for middle-class villa gardeners, though many were more encouraging. If *How to Lay out a Small Garden* provided the model for Wemmick's Walworth garden in *Great Expectations* (1860-61), Dickens certainly intended the reference to be an obvious one. His readers would have understood that the components of this garden too closely squared with the 'catalogue of errors' style of garden writing in the period to be either accidental or plagiarised. If they did not recognise Kemp's hand, then there were plenty of others similar. Incidentally, Kemp's overblown writing style owed much to the fact that his little book contained not one illustration, which was rare in books on ornamental gardening, even in 1850. This kept the price within the range of those wanting to lay out their small garden to 3*s*. 6*d*. The emphases are Kemp's own.

Kemp began by stating that when choosing a site for a respectable residence it was desirable 'to be out of the way of cottage property and to escape from the gaze of travellers along contiguous roads.'[126] Dickens described the Walworth site as being within 'a collection of back lanes, ditches, and little gardens'. Although this presented 'an aspect of rather dull retirement [...] Wemmick's house was a little wooden cottage

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[125]Edward Kemp, *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, (Bradbury and Evans, 1850), pp. iii-iv. Incidentally, Kemp was Paxton's assistant and later his successor as 'Landscape Gardener, Birkenhead Park', laid out in 1843-44.

[126]Kemp, *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 9.

in the midst of plots of garden.'[127] Cottages did not always conjure images of rural plenty and domestic harmony, especially at mid century; and even though Dickens considered the area of Walworth much improved from its desolate and dangerous condition at the beginning of the century, it seems to have retained some of its 'outlaw' reputation in the popular imagination.[128] Kemp certainly equated cottages and their tenants with poverty, squalor, and crime; he advised his readers to keep away from them. Even the hint of down-at-heel domesticity was naturally unwelcome in his ideal suburban environment.

Kemp's second warning rested with the apparently sensible statement that 'a *multiplicity of walks*, beyond what are absolutely requisite, is very undesirable in a small piece of ground.'[129] In Wemmick's garden, Pip tells us innocently, he was conducted to 'a bower about a dozen yards off, but which was approached by such ingenious twists of the path that it took quite a long time to get at'.[130] It was, according to Kemp, in poor taste 'to crowd within a confined space the appropriate adornments of the most ample gardens';[131] correspondingly Dickens has Pip tell us that on reaching the bower

> Our glasses were already set forth. Our punch was cooling in an ornamental lake, on whose margin the bower was raised. This piece of water (with an island in the middle which might have been the salad for supper) was of a circular form, and he had constructed a fountain in it, which, when you set a little mill going and took a cork out of a pipe, played to that powerful extent that it made the back of your hand quite wet.[132]

Quite apart from cramming too many objects into too small a space, Wemmick exhibits a dubious fondness for objects that the narrator, like Kemp, repeatedly termed 'ingenious'. Naturally, such '*little surprises* for visitors' were not tolerated in Kemp's small garden: 'ingenious tricks' are 'silly and weak', while 'all manner of eccentricities'

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[127]Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1860-61; Wordsworth Classics, 1996), p. 160.

[128]Dickens, 'The Black Veil' in *Sketches by Boz*, (1839; Penguin Books, 1995), p. 433.

[129]Kemp, *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 24.

[130]Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1862-63), p. 160.

[131]Kemp, *How to Lay Out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 25.

[132]Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1862-63), p. 161.

show 'evidence of a feeble mind.'[133] This was not all, for '[a]mong the more specific features to be repudiated in a small garden, the employment of rockeries or other *rustic objects in connexion with the house* [...] may be mentioned.'[134] Rockeries, gothic arches and windows were usually associated with rusticity. In turn, rusticity was considered wholly inappropriate in urban or suburban gardens, especially when intimately connected with the house itself. The views expressed in an article on 'Rustic Furniture' in the *Floral World* (1858) were typical:

> Take a turn anywhere about the suburbs of London at this season, and you will see, here and there on the roadsides, little collections of lop-sided, splay-footed, bandy, bow-legged and broken-backed specimens of tables, baskets, garden seats, and little vases on the top of broomsticks, from any hundred of which a man of taste would find it difficult to select a single specimen he could pleasurably put to use [...] the customers are most to blame.[135]

Further,

> rustic work and rock work are, as I consider, in the very worst taste, anywhere in front of a neat villa. A rustic cottage may derive additional rusticity from such things, but wherever the dwelling is of a modern cut - say, for mutually understanding each other, any way genteel - then every atom of rusticity, or even roughness, is a mistake.[136]

In larger suburban gardens rustic or Gothic furniture (seats, arbours, summer-houses etc.) was permissible if located at the farthest reaches of the plot. The offending juxtaposition between the 'naturalness' of rustic-work and the 'artifice' of the house would clearly be more evident in the small garden of a London suburb. Dickens deliberately has Pip think that Wemmick's garden contained 'the smallest house I ever saw; with the queerest gothic windows (by far the greater part of them sham) and a gothic door, almost too small to get in at.'[137] In an apparently benign passage which introduced both Mr. Sponge and the reader to Benjamin Buckram's home on the rural fringes of north London, the novelist R.

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[133]Kemp, pp. 32-34.

[134]*Ibid.*, p. 26.

[135]Hibberd, *Floral World*, 1 (7), 1858, 157.

[136]Hibberd, *Town Garden*, 1859, p. 16.

[137]Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1862-63), p. 160.

S. Surtees constructed a carefully observed satirical picture of the *arriviste* home and its accoutrements in his *Sporting Tour* of 1853:

> "Ah, Mr. Sponge!" exclaimed Mr. Buckram, who, having seen our friend advancing up the twisting approach from the road to his house through a little square window almost blinded with Irish ivy, out of which he was in the habit of contemplating the arrival of his occasional lodgers [...] "But come in, Mr. Sponge, sir, come in," continued he, backing himself through a little sentry-box of a green portico, to a narrow passage which branched off into little rooms on either side.[138]

Ben Buckram was, pointedly, a horse-dealing Jew who "doesn't exactly live in London [...] - that's to say [...] - a little way out of it, you know - have a little hindependence of my own, you understand."[139] In a characterisation worthy of Cobbett, Surtees had Buckram keep 'a dilapidated dove-cote above a pump in the centre' of his little square yard: 'Mr. Buckram, not growing corn, could afford to keep pigeons.'[140] If Buckram had succeeded in concealing his parvenu status in spite of his Jewishness, his aspirations to 'property' and his peripheral but farmless location, all would soon be revealed to the visitors. From the moment when they 'advance[d] up the twisting approach from the road to his house' Buckram was already watching from the window. A contemporary audience would have understood this allusion to the unnecessarily circuitous 'semi-circular sweep [...] talked of complacently as a carriage drive' - which was a desirable if rarely attained element of the fashionable villa, and a perennial favourite with the novelist.[141] The 'window almost blinded with Irish ivy', on the other hand, was universally attainable. When attached to an inappropriately small home with greater pretensions, the curving drive and choking climbers became ridiculous, no matter that most readers who shared the joke probably had just such gardens themselves. Crossing the threshold, Mr. Buckram must back 'himself through a little sentry-box of a green portico,' his rustic porch being so small that, like the 'narrow passage which branched off into little rooms on either side', there wasn't room enough

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[138]R. S. Surtees, *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, (1853; Wordsworth, 1995), p. 10.

[139]Surtees, *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, (1853), p. 64.

[140]*Ibid.*, p. 11.

[141]See, for example, M. E. Braddon, *The Story of Barbara*, (John and Robert Maxwell, 1880), p. 14.

in which to swing a cat. Altogether, this house, like Wemmick's, represented what Cobbett called 'the *grand en petit*, or mock magnificence' of the homes built by the newly affluent.[142]

Returning to Wemmick's domain, there 'was a little wooden cottage in the midst of plots of garden, and the top of it was cut out and painted like a battery mounted with guns.' Attached to the house, hereafter deemed the Castle, 'the piece of ordnance work referred to was mounted in a separate fortress, constructed of lattice-work'.[143] Like the battlemented Castle and its gothic windows, lattice-work was employed by Dickens to connote contemporary notions of inappropriate suburban rusticity, though he did not necessarily find it so.[144] Not surprisingly, Kemp singled out the 'castellated grotto' as particularly offensive in this environment, he continues:

> As similarly interfering with the harmony of a place, the employment of conspicuous grottoes, towers, summer-houses, or other buildings, within a short distance, or in open view, from the house [...] cannot be defended on any known principle in landscape arrangement; it is to the startling and grossly peculiar forms sometimes met with in suburban gardens that the chief objection lies.[145]

Wemmick's 'pretty pleasure-ground',[146] his 'bit of garden and a summer house',[147] contained these and other offending articles highlighted by Kemp, including 'everything partaking of the nature of *sham*', 'mere fronts to buildings' and, notably, 'bridges which have *no meaning* or for which there is *no necessity*'.[148] Wemmick's suburban Castle was, famously, furnished with a draw-bridge; it also boasted a flagstaff and a gun which was fired at nine o'clock every night:

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[142]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830), p. 5.

[143]Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1862-63), p. 160.

[144]Dickens' house at Gad's Hill, which he acquired in 1856, had a 'Swiss chalet' in the garden where he retired to work. See John Sutherland, explanatory notes to Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, 1996, p. 672.

[145]Kemp, *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 27.

[146]Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1862-63), p. 161.

[147]*Ibid.*, p. 156.

[148]Kemp, *How to Lay Out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 34. Emphases mine.

> "That's a real flagstaff, you see," said Wemmick, "and on Sundays I run up a little flag. Then look here. After I have crossed this bridge, I hoist it up - so - and cut off the communication."
> The bridge was a plank, and it crossed a chasm about four feet wide and two deep.[149]

Although Dickens' and Kemp's descriptions of gardens undoubtedly exaggerated their many components, there is no reason to suggest that a garden such as Wemmick's was wholly fictional, even in containing a grotto and 'meaningless' drawbridge. The Booth Report, for example, recorded that in 1897/8 Redcross Gardens, only a mile from Walworth, was 'carefully laid out with a pond, rustic bridge [and] mosaics let into a wall'.[150] South of Camberwell Green at the edge of the old Champion de Crespigny estate, the Report also noted the house and garden of an old chimney sweep. 'His house-front is strangely and wonderfully decorated with oyster and other shells and before the house, encroaching I imagine on the public land, he has made little grottoes. It is all very barbarous and very effective'. Moreover, the author of this report, PC Young, agreed that 'the old man is very proud of his handiwork' and that 'the house might with propriety be honoured with a touch of pink'; meaning that despite the poverty of Tiger Yard ('Very poor, casual. Chronic want'), the care manifestly taken with his otherwise impoverished domestic environment had raised the sweep's expected status to 'fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.'[151]

In his autobiography, *London and Londoners in the Eighteen-Fifties and Sixties*, Alfred Rosling Bennett gave a wealth of information about life and landscape in suburban Camberwell, just off the Walworth Road, where he lived with his parents and siblings between 1854 and 1860. Here, he remembered how he learned to play cricket with the other 'respectable' boys in 'a big paddock called Mills's Field near us at Camberwell', on Peckham Rye.

> Now entirely cut up and built over, it was then merely fringed with houses but fringed nearly all round. Many of these dwellings had doors in the walls or fences of their back gardens giving access to the grassland across little bridges spanning a ditch or drain that ran

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[149]Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (1862-63), p. 160.

[150]Steel (ed.), *Booth Notebooks*, 1997, p. 38.

[151]*Ibid.*, p. 185.

> round the boundary. Some of these bridges were merely planks, but others had been perhaps *unnecessarily* elaborated, and one or two were actually draw-bridges that could be raised and secured upright against little garden gates. Not one of these suburban Englishmen's castles sported a portcullis, however.[152]

Of course, a few personal testimonies cannot entirely support the evidence cited in fiction and guides to prove the existence of certain types of garden components in the period. The last witness had also been influenced by the hindsight of adulthood and perhaps by the very same novels and guides. A child of ten would hardly consider that a drawbridge was an 'unnecessary' adjunct to an 'Englishman's castle'; such words would not be within either his vocabulary or his comprehension. Moreover, drawbridges suggested the fantasy worlds supplied in children's books and boys' magazines where necessity was besides the point. And the element of fantasy which the drawbridges represented to Alfred Bennett, and presumably to their owners, was the very reason he remembered them. But the combined evidence of Dickens, Kemp, Booth's researchers and Bennett, suggests that these and other items in the gardener's itinerary which now appear exaggerated reactions to mainstream suburban garden taste, had more than a little basis in reality. The long period over which both happy anecdote and criticism about individual components of the suburban garden appeared, also gives some idea of gardeners' tenacity. *The English Flower Garden* was still complaining about the 'construction of needless bridges [...] over wretched duckponds of small extent' in the 1880s.[153] It is probable that bridges, lakes, rustic-arbours and even grottoes existed in some form or other throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries. Hence these domestic adornments were numerous enough in the range of suburban gardens to continue to be the object of both horticultural interest and ridicule.

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[152]Alfred Rosling Bennett, *London and Londoners in the Eighteen-Fifties and Sixties*, (T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1924), p. 346. Emphases mine.

[153]G. H. B., 'Flower Garden and Pleasure Ground Houses, &c.' in Robinson, *English Flower Garden* , 1899, p. 368.

Summer-Houses, Rustic-Work and other *H*arbours for Earwigs.

Contemporary gardening literature concurred with Edward Kemp that all such '[a]rtificial basins of water, ponds, figures, canons, groups of stones, spar, or roots' and other '*unsuitable ornaments*' were 'wholly inadmissible'[154] garden components in exactly the same way as was garden furniture in the shape of arbours, seats and summer-houses. As errors of garden design rustic-work was held to be peculiarly suburban, and an example of the poor or inappropriate gardening taste which frequently attracted that adjective, both individually and collectively. In moving from the specific to the general Shirley Hibberd's *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste* (1856) summed this up perfectly.

> As to summer-houses and arbours generally, there never was so much ugliness scattered about the world as of late years has been sprinkled over suburban gardens under the vain pretence of ornament and use. The majority are like toll-houses, or beer-shops, or sweetmeat stalls, destitute of elegance, use, and propriety.
>
> Some of these suburban retreats look very much like the little cabins of the fly-boats on the junction canal [...] ARBOURS INDEED! What a perversion of language, they are *h*arbours for earwigs, cats, and other vermin, not tree bowers and trellis shelters, as their philology suggests.[155]

Emily Eden painted a similar, though less impassioned portrait in her fictional *The Semi-Detached House* (1860). Following a leaking flue in the kitchen, the occupants of one half of the semi-detached house on the western edges of London, found 'refuge in our wretched little asylum in the garden'. In this 'mitigated shower-bath', 'our wet arbour', they settled 'on a hard bench, about as comfortable as a gridiron, and in a summer-house, half-trellis, half-earwigs' and 'all of aslop and dripping so.'[156]

Thorstein Veblen theorised the material culture of the North American middle-class domestic environment in the same rather disgusted tone as many of the English authors cited above. His failure to equate the concept of 'usefulness' in terms other

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[154]Kemp, *How to Lay Out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 27.

[155]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, 1857, p. 496.

[156]Emily Eden, *The Semi-Detached House*, (1860; republished with *The Semi-Attached Couple* as *Two Novels*, Gollancz Classics, 1969), pp. 262-263.

than economic consumption and emulation rendered him incapable of seeing beyond the surface of the paraphernalia of the 'leisure class' and of treating said consumer goods as separate from those of the upper classes. Like many critics of middling-class horticultural practice, both before and after, Veblen refused to see these 'canons of taste' as representing anything other than the hollow sham of conspicuous consumption. He was unable - or unwilling - to acknowledge the significant, and socially useful, role of items for domestic consumption within the landscape and culture of suburban, or middle-class, communities. Beginning, as always, from a 'top down' theory of emulation, there was, he said, 'a predilection for the rustic and the "natural" in parks and grounds' of the 'higher social and intellectual levels' of society. Among the middle-class, however, he detected a need to affect 'serviceability' which at its 'widest divergence from the first promptings of the sense of economic beauty, is afforded by the cast iron rustic fence and trellis or by a circuitous drive laid across level ground.' For example,

> A weakness for crudely serviceable contrivances that pointedly suggest immediate and wasteless use is present even in the middle-class tastes; but it is there kept well in hand under the unbroken dominance of the canon of reputable futility. Consequently it works out in a variety of ways and means for shamming serviceability, - in such contrivances as rustic fences, bridges, bowers, pavilions, and the like decorative features.[157]

Literally hundreds of the same and similar views of the 'sham' nature of the suburban garden were published throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The common root seems to have been the growth of the middle classes, whose many layers of members, though they had not answered Marx and joined with the working classes in revolt, threatened to usurp the powerful position of the old ruling classes by their social, cultural, economic and political presence. Their landscapes, like other aspects of their material culture were becoming increasingly indistinguishable from their upper-class neighbours', mainly because the latter was becoming aesthetically suburbanised. Nevertheless, conservative economic and social theory attempted to divide them artificially by affecting to deduce different relationships of material goods with their

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[157]Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (1899; Penguin, 1994), p. 137.

different class of consumers. One was natural, because inherited; the other, artificial. According to this logic, artifice was the hall-mark of the *nouveaux arrivistes.*

Sticks or Standard Rose-Trees.

Other characteristics were also attributed to the parvenu garden, in an attempt to further denigrate it socially. Many suburban garden features were criticised for being artificial and unnatural, but the standard rose sustained a barrage of insults throughout the century on the grounds of both its unnatural appearance and artificial propagation. The standard rose-tree was created by grafting showy rose varieties onto brier rootstocks and clipped so as to resemble a standard. Jane Loudon explained in 1843 that 'briers for budding are purchased from country people, who find them growing wild in the coppice woods and field hedges; and they are used for standard roses'. '[T]hese standard roses, though now so common, were unknown till about 1803, when briers that had been budded in this manner were sent from Holland into France and afterwards into England.[158] William Robinson described them as 'Roses stuck - and mostly starving - on the tops of sticks or standards [...] and pruned hard and set thin so as to develop large blooms'.[159] They soon became a popular component of the fashionable garden, lasted through the period, and were revived later in the century in the 'Queen Anne gardens' of Hampstead, Bedford Park and other aesthetic suburbs,[160] becoming a mainstay of the Edwardian suburban garden. Cobbett thought gentlemen's gardens ought not to be 'disfigured by the folly of a standard tree'.[161] While Robinson, quoting from a paper read at the RHS Rose Conference at Chiswick, noted

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[158]Jane Loudon, *Practical Instructions in Gardening for Ladies*, ((John Murray, 1841; 1843 edn.), p. 351.

[159]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 184.

[160]For a discussion of the role of the domestic garden in the 'Queen Anne revival' see Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light, The Queen Anne Movement 1860-1900*, (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1977), especially his section on 'the old-fashioned garden', pp. 152-159.

[161]William Cobbett, *The English Gardener*, (1829; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 174.

that 'of the evil effect of the Standard Rose any one may judge in the suburbs of any town'.

> Instead of seeing the Rose in many different attitudes in a country place, we see a wretched mob of standards and half-standards rising out of the ground, generally in a miserable formal arrangement called the Rosery. Instead of forming beautiful Rose-gardens, many growers have distinguished themselves by growing Roses on tall briers and other stocks, from which they get maybe one or two flowers bigger than their neighbours' to send to the Rose-show. The Rose exhibitor's garden is even uglier than the so-called Rosery in the large country-seat.[162]

Robinson, still quoting from the Chiswick paper, argued that the 'number of Roses suitable for standards is comparatively small, yet people persist in attempting to grow all varieties in this form; and when an army of gawky scarecrows is the result, the Roses are blamed.'[163] Such examples perpetuated not only the idea (contained in Veblen's 'canon of taste') that the domestic consumer was wasteful, they presented her as inept. These characterisations equated poor taste in the domestic environment with the 'natural' preferences of the puerile, the infantile and, increasingly, the savage frame of mind.

A Multiplicity of Flower-Beds.

In 1850 Edward Kemp wrote that 'Flower-beds, too, when introduced in any quantity on a small lawn, have an exceedingly artificial appearance, reminding one of the character common to children's gardens.'[164] Shirley Hibberd's *Rustic Adornments* (1857) stressed that the educated mind 'has come to regard a garden as a choice appendage of the house, rather than as a toy-shop, a gingerbread stall, or a receptacle for mole-hills and wayside rubbish'.[165] During the 1860s, the professional horticultural paper the *Gardener's Chronicle*, bemoaned the state of 'the toy garden in the crowded town':

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[162]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 753.

[163]*Ibid.*, p. 754.

[164]Kemp, *How to Lay Out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 23.

[165]Shirley Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 334.

> In the race after rare plants young men frequently despise plants of merit, merely because they are common. There is a species of gardening which, for want of any definite term to express it, I may call toy gardening. It has nothing to do with order, or even with common sense, for the plants are grown, or rather exist by innate force; delved up in the middle of summer, and transplanted when in flower, they eventually recover.[166]

The toy garden in this case was the bedded-out border of the 'town' or inner suburban garden. It was the creation of a young man, probably a clerk, in competition with neighbouring gardeners to produce the brightest and most intricate bed from the most exciting-looking flowers. Some five years later in 1871, Hibberd reiterated that 'in many small gardens the multiplicity of flower-beds is puerile, and makes one think of a doll's garden, or a farthing Kaleidoscope'.[167] Meanwhile, Mrs. T. Francis Foster mused in 1881 that, 'We cannot help fancying that the gardener of the future, looking back upon the system of bedding out, will hold it to have been something very like the play of children.'[168] The prevailing critical tone tended to combine the ineducated taste of the juvenile and savage to explain all the worst excesses of contemporary middle-class taste, and its need for instruction.

In the same way that feminine inferences were made from associations with the theatre, the pastry-cook and an attraction to shells and other decorative objects, the references to dolls and toys also had a gender inflection: women and children were frequently treated as one group by criticising garden writers and men's inclusion with them was rare. As contributory factors in explaining the poor taste in garden design the feminine and the childish and the barbarous were often bound tightly together. All three groups had yet to learn the socially and morally acceptable behaviour appropriate to their 'new-born' status; their 'taste' had yet to evolve. The garden historian Eleanour Sinclair Rohde remarked in 1932 how Loudon had conflated the female, the child and the foreigner to explain the ugly design of the fashionable floral basket of the 1830s and

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[166]*Floral World*, 1 (new series), (6), 1866, 214-215. Reprinted from 'Pet Plants' by Alexander Forsyth in the *Gardener's Chronicle*, n.d.

[167]Shirley Hibberd, *The Amateur's Flower Garden*, (Groombridge & Sons, 1871), p. 241.

[168]Mrs. T. Francis Foster, *On the Art of Gardening*, (Satchell and Co., 1881), p. 24.

40s: 'Loudon observed gravely that this sort of gardening may appeal to persons in remote districts, to residents in the colonies "and to infant and female gardeners".'[169]

However, although the root of this terminology was critical, the words themselves were absorbed into the generic language of garden design and were used without morally judgmental inflection. Remember PC Young's comment that the Sweep's grottoes were 'all very barbarous and very effective.'[170] Barbarous and savage elements in the garden may also have represented something of an escape from what James Kenward called the otherwise 'unjungular' and 'kept' nature of parks. They were emblems of the larger, uncultivated landscape, hence their condemnation as 'sham'. At nearly sixty years of age, Eleanor Vere Boyle, for instance, confessed to enjoying that which her friend and colleague Gertrude Jekyll disdained as 'make-believe' in the garden. Although Mrs. Boyle kept 'a parterre for bedding-out things - the sole plot allowed here for Scarlet Pelargoniums and the like', and 'the only foliage plant we tolerate - a deep crimson velvet-leaved coleus', most of her Surrey garden was devoted to scenes of 'wild profusion'. Her *Days and Hours in a Garden* (1884) told how she 'meant to encourage the delusion of the savage wild' amidst this profusion. And in a distinctly different tone to that of her peers, she wrote mischievously that 'I am afraid I can never be quite serious about a garden; I am always inclined to find delight in fancies, and reminiscences of a child's garden.' Of all the wild corners of her garden her favourite was the 'crown of all [...] the "Fantaisie!"'[171] If Mrs. Boyle's peers tolerated her 'fantaisies' and 'delusions of the savage wild' in her own large grounds, they would very likely charge the suburban gardener who attempted such effects at home with having delusions of grandeur. In a suburban garden the creation of scenes to conjure reminiscences of a child's garden would be facile; attempts at the 'savage wild', barbaric; and 'delight in fancies' sham foolery. E.V.B's

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[169]Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, *The Story of the Garden*, (Medici Society, 1932), p. 227.

[170]Steel (ed.), *Booth Report*, 1997, p. 185.

[171]'E.V.B.', *Days and Hours in a Garden*, (Eliott Stock, 1884), p. 10.

Buckinghamshire garden at Huntercombe Manor could appropriate such language, but the modest gardens of her thousands of lower-class readers could not.

Rockeries and other Very Incongruous Heaps of Stones.

Some of the most vehement exposees of what critics judged to be inappropriately designed gardens used the anti-suburban lexicon facetiously. These applications were directed in particular to the one feature of the suburban garden upon which Dickens and Veblen, unlike Edward Kemp, did not touch: the rockery. There was an astonishing number of pages devoted to the rights and wrongs of rockery-making in books and journals throughout the century, some of them positively violent in tone. From all of these we can at least deduce that rockery-making was a popular pastime, and did indeed fulfil something of the need for fantasy, judging from the number of examples recorded. In Creed Place, Greenwich, for instance, a clean, comfortable, two-storey house with a small front garden, occupied by either a train driver, mechanic or man working at the Arsenal and Telegraph Works 'contain[ed] a plaster castle, rockery, etc.', laid out for all to see.[172] Unlike this straightforward description of a rockery, most were unfavourable. Criticism of the 'rockery' in gardening books usually concentrated anti-suburban rhetoric to its very essence. 'Rock-work', on the other hand, was considered aesthetically far superior.

Ideally, rock-work was constructed from geologically appropriate materials, was of a more 'authentic' scale, and planted with the correct Alpine species. Gardeners were advised that successful rock-work was rarely achieved without personal experience of mountainous travel. It must also appear to rise naturally out of a wild corner away from the artifice of the 'home landscape'. Naturally, not all gardeners had first-hand knowledge of the mountains, nor a space large enough in which to represent a natural outcrop 'appropriately'. Thus gardeners of modest plots with limited experience of travel invented their hilly terrains and located them in more convenient places. This was the rockery of contemporary garden design criticism. It came to

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[172]Steel (ed.), *Booth Report*, 1997, p. 271.

stand for all that was childish, 'make-believe', superficial and pretentious, partly because of its association with the public tea- and tavern-gardens.[173]

> Take a flower-garden, and in the midst of it make a pyramid of vitrified bricks and flints, or throw up a hillock of huge stones, and set upon the top of it a small plaster statue, or a cast of Queen Elizabeth, or Shakspere, or Jullien; daub the stones over with blue and green paint - in fact, moss them and bronze them, and use plenty of colour. Then stick in anywhere a geranium, a fern or two, put a few shabby lilacs at the back, and make round the whole a gravel-path, edged with white flints or brick-rubbish to correspond with the eminence, and you have one of these "model rockeries" that delight Londoners at Cremorne, Vauxhall and elsewhere, and which some people copy in arranging their own grounds.[174]

A domestic rock-work should emulate the natural terrains of wild plants not the atmosphere of pleasure-gardens. A 'rock-work, well-built up - busts, shells, and gingerbread excluded - is an additional item in the imitation of the "adjuncts which the plants naturally enjoy."' Shirley Hibberd admired rock-works which supported collections of ferns. But, '[i]f built up in fantastic pyramids, and with pinnacles cleaving the air; if adorned with Triton's horns, and blocks of coral, and foreign shells and gleanings from curiosity shops, a Fernery becomes a pantomime'.[175] Criticism also focused upon the 'false' materials used in a rockery's construction as well as the 'pantomimic' articles supported. In 1838, its industrial by-product components exercised ridicule because it was

> by no means unusual, in our own suburban gardens, to see [...] fanciful, and very incongruous, heaps of stones, chiefly irregularly formed things, the scoriae of forges, and large bits of coke from the gas works, covered with sedums, house-leeks, and other plants, which may be made to grow in such situations. Most of these are planted, and executed, in the worst taste.[176]

The practice of decorating the rockery with shells, meanwhile, incurred accusations of childishness and effeminacy because of women and children's particular associations

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[173]Tea-gardens were associated with suburban watering holes, such as those at Bagnigge Wells, Pentonville (1690-1842), or the Royal Beulah Spa, Norwood (1837-1855).

[174]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 404.

[175]*Ibid.*, p. 436.

[176]Charles M'Intosh, *The Flower Garden*, in Tom Carter, *The Victorian Garden*, (Bell & Hyman, 1994), p. 14.

with them.[177] Shells were deemed especially incongruous when paired with coke, slag and clinker. Rock-gardening was frequently given as a feminine occupation *per se*, which may explain why it received such persistent condemnation. However, although Jane Loudon wrote that '*Rockwork*, though composed of somewhat ponderous materials, [and] is very frequently arranged according to female taste',[178] she intended this to include all forms of rock-gardening; and pointed to the best example of rock-work having been 'designed by a lady, and executed entirely under her direction.' Nevertheless, the association between rock-gardens of all sorts and feminine design and consumption in general was firmly established by the 1830s and '40s. Hence Shirley Hibberd's aside that

> *Men* of taste generally eschew rock-work in a garden; and well they may, considering how, in too many instances, taste is violated by the introduction of oyster pyramids, plaster busts with dilapidated noses, conch shells, mineralogical specimens, and even broken crockery, under the general denomination of rock-work.[179]

Hoopers Gardening Guide (1883) recognised that 'the desire for a Rockery of some kind is now generally evident in most gardens' but deplored the form which these had taken. 'In the first place, a heap of stones is not a rock-work, neither will plants thrive in dry, dusty soil loosely spread between such - although we have seen numberless cases of the attempt being made'.[180] The resulting effect 'was very like the rows of false-teeth in the dentists' shops in St. Martin's Lane.'[181] In *Home and Garden* (1900), Gertrude Jekyll included a section on 'Small Rock Gardens' which stated that '[a]n artificial rockery is usually a bit of frankly simple make-believe. Nine times out of

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[177]Shell decoration had a long historical association with women's design for the domestic environment, especially in garden ornaments such as grottoes and summer houses. As well as featuring as part of natural history collections, shells were available for sale from fashionable shops.

[178]Jane Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies*, 1843, p. 354.

[179]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, emphasis mine. Hibberd usually used both genders in his writing. See David Stuart, *The Garden Triumphant*, (Viking, 1988), p. 188.

[180]*Hooper's Gardening Guide*, in Carter, *Victorian Garden*, 1984, p. 48.

[181]Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 147.

ten there is something about it half funny, half pathetic, so indecent so childish in its absolute failure to feel like real rocky ground.'[182]

The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening (1892) was unusual in its scorning of the 'Rock garden' as a collection of masculine memories. The explanation for this lay in the social status of the male amateur gardener. Like Wemmick's garden, the plot they portrayed contained a flag-staff. 'The Rockery is achieved by the *tradesman* at his suburban residence, or is a perpetual joy to the *retiredsea-captain*, who adorns it with huge shells and battered figure heads, and erects a flag-staff in the middle'.[183] Although the captain was retired, he proudly advertised membership of his old profession in much the same way as did the 'Wooden ship-breakers [...] with figure heads as doorposts' in the naval suburb of Woolwich.[184] Increasing overseas travel, whether by seamen, imperial administrators, missionaries or tourists, meant that the quantities of foreign material culture imported into the home country, including its domestic environment, increased in both variety and number: exotic objects were reminders of other lives as well as other worlds. Collections made from the seashore might be particularly significant to a sailor, rock collections to a navigator and plants, of course, were special to botanists and to all who called themselves a gardener. This collection of objects in the garden may be seen as the lower-middle-class equivalent of the domestic museum, especially as it was criticised for being so. In 1871, Hibberd lectured his reader on the subject of the 'Rock Work and Alpine Garden', that 'if a natural pile of rocks were imitated, it should consist of such rocks as might be met with somewhere, and not a collection of geological curiosities in the fashion of an outdoor museum.' Some gardeners were specific about their garden's museum function, in spite of criticism from magazines. A double fronted house in Amersham Grove, New Cross, for example, had recently been occupied in 1897 'by an old sailor who built a

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[182]Gertrude Jekyll, *Home and Garden*, (Longmans, Green and Co., 1900), p. 96.

[183]Edith Chamberlain and Fanny Douglas, *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*, 1892, p. 57, emphases mine.

[184]Steel, (ed.), *Booth Notebooks*, 1997, p. 284.

small museum in the garden at the side and stocked it with curios.'[185] Just down the road, in Amelia Terrace, Deptford, was 'a row of old 2-st cottages with flower gardens in front. On the front of the centre house is a full-sized figure of a sailor holding a Union Jack.'[186] It was significant, then, that the flagstaff erected by Kew Gardens on its former Mount of Victory in 1861 was donated by a Mr. Stamp of Rotherhithe, the naval suburb adjoining Deptford.[187] Edward Stamp was a timber merchant, living close to the site of his business. His gift of the 159 feet long spar of Douglas fir, its erection in the Royal Gardens amongst other items of imperial botany,[188] and the appearance of the story in the press, was not only a physical reminder of the continued importance of overseas navigation and transportation to the national economy, it was a legitimisation of Stamp's neighbours' displays of similar souvenirs in their ordinary suburban gardens. Stamp's second gift, (the first one had snapped on erection), was an emblem of his business and its success overseas. In similar fashion, the sailor's garden was not a space for creating *imaginary* other worlds to transport him, like Wemmick, from the monotony of his work-a-day life: it told of *remembered* places and had a tangible present-day function. The garden of flagstaffs, figure-heads, sea-shells and the like was a record of a sailor's previous life rendered in material form. No doubt it also helped raise his horizons beyond those imposed by landlubbing domesticity. Most of all, perhaps, it indicated to passing travellers a common background and experience which might be rekindled with the aid of a pot of grog and a pipe in the garden.

Public parks were criticised for encouraging domestic rockery-making; and gardeners, especially lower middle-class male gardeners, were criticised for copying the public parks at home in their gardens. Like the *Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*, other writers associated certain bad taste with men in the lesser trades.

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[185]*Ibid.*, p. 141.

[186]*Ibid.*, p. 137.

[187]*Floral World*, 4 (7), 1861, 159.

[188]See Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens*, (Harville, 1995), p. 370.

Under the heading 'Refuse Brick "Rockeries"', for instance, William Robinson complained about the appearance of the 'brick rubbish salad' which might be expected of 'a *Brentford cobbler* who happens to live near a brickyard [and] makes a little "rockwork" [...] in his garden.' Moreover,

> If the practice were confined to cottages near a brickfield it would not much astonish us; but in Dulwich Park several thousand tons of it have been put about under the pretence of making rock-gardens [...] If the County Council waste money in this way, we cannot perhaps wonder so much at the owners of villas doing it.[189]

Elizabeth Watts was one of the very few garden writers to sympathise with what she perceived to the universal desire for a rockery - although even she used the more accepted term rock-work - in whatever form it took. In *Flowers and the Flower Garden* (1869) she wrote

> Rockwork is a very favourite decoration for gardens and pleasure grounds. Some people may call it a cockney fancy to pretend to bring wild nature into trim gardens by building up stones, and planting ferns, trees, sedums, and appropriate vegetation among them, but what matter if the owner likes it, he may do what he likes with his own.[190]

Hibberd made a similar but noncommittal point about the 'Rockery and Alpine Garden' in his *Amateur's Flower Garden* (1871). 'The course of procedure sanctioned by custom in the literary treatment of this subject', he intoned without a trace of irony,

> consists in first destroying all existing rockeries everywhere by unqualified abuse, and then reconstructing them on the author's model, on the hypothesis that they do not exist to please their owners, but to illustrate the writer's theory of what a rockery should be.[191]

The gardens created for suburban villas by the middling groups of society met with very different needs than did those of the public park. Their gardeners struggled with adverse environmental conditions not experienced in the country and with only occasional, if any, paid help. It would seem that in their leisure time suburban gardeners pleased themselves and did indeed do what they liked with their own.

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[189]Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 149, emphasis mine.

[190]Elizabeth Watts, *Flowers and the Flower Garden*, in Carter, *Victorian Garden*, 1984, p. 143.

[191]Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower Garden*, 1871, p. 246.

Throughout the nineteenth century there was a thread of writing in the horticultural press which insisted that it was the middling classes of professionals who set the tone and standard in modern gardening. Although frequently contradictory, this writing proposed that it was the fruit of middle-class labours which had made British horticulture great, even when they were accused of pursuing their hobby improperly. One of the greatest of Victorian self-made men, who was also a gardener and horticultural journalist, had created just such a rock-work in his own suburban garden. In 1870 the *Floral World* ran an article called, simply, 'Appropriateness'. It detailed the horrors of homes where 'at one step you go from the palace to the savage solitude, from polished marble to desert, from crinoline and silk to nature unadorned, or to the wild picturesque of barbarian costume - a rag, a skin, or a fig leaf.'[192] This, explained the author, was what was meant by 'unmitigated inappropriateness':

> What do you think now of a charming residence in a half Italian style, or say modified Italian, in a suburb where horticulture is in a high favour - what do you think of such a residence, the property of a gentleman well-known for his spirited patronage of all that's good in horticulture - what do you think of its being enclosed with ramparts of rockwork? I assure you it is a fact. You look out of the drawing-room windows on the terraces of burrs from the brickfield rising tier above tier like modified "Grampians"; and a lovely garden - one of the loveliest small gardens in England is completely hidden from view.[193]

The garden was the creation of Sir Joseph Paxton for his house 'Rockhills', built to oversee the Crystal Palace, from which vantage point he was, quite literally, master of all he surveyed. The author of the article, 'Tom Tiddler', (most probably a pseudonym for Hibberd, who was normally full of admiration for Paxton), appears to have been too reverent to publish it in his life time. Paxton been dead five years before the article moved in to demolish this famous garden. All London, and certainly all London gardeners, would know Paxton's Sydenham villa, 'Rockhills'. So when the *Floral World* asked rhetorically 'Do you call this appropriate?', its readers, through a mutual appreciation of rock-work, probably felt some distant kinship with the great man, and

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[192]*Floral World*, 5 (new series), (3), 1870, 76-76.

[193]*Ibid.*, 76.

believed, as he had evidently done, that their rockery was a perfectly appropriate adornment for the suburban house and garden.

Although we must caution against confusing representation with reality, we might have expected to find the villa gardener creating a ruralised retreat from the pressures of the city. But far from withdrawing into mock rusticity, villa gardeners were professedly modern in their appreciation of the garden, even where they liked a rock-work and a bit of rustic furniture. Contemporary advertising demonstrated the range of chemical, biological and mechanical aids with which to cultivate the modern suburban garden. Relaxation in the garden was as likely to take the form of scientific study and physical exercise as it was a poetic appraisal of Nature's beauty; the garden was patently not a natural place, though nature might be studied in it. At a time when horticulture had become the driving force in landscape and garden design, it simply makes no sense to say, as has frequently been the case, that the growth in gardening was signal of the desire to return to a rural golden age. Rather, the industrial spirit which drove suburban development, as Cobbett continually reminds us, was understood at the time to be the invisible foundation of the villa house and garden.

4.6. 'Wealth, Comfort, and Convenience': Suburban Improvement and Civilised Landscapes

Given the criticism of suburban culture analysed above one could be forgiven for assuming that all public accounts of suburban expansion during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were similarly damning. The reading public could hardly fail to be aware of the pervasive anti-suburban sentiment expressed in all forms of imaginative, technical and didactic literature. But there was also, however, a vein of writing in the nineteenth-century press which saw in the suburban environment something to celebrate; namely, its civility, its comparative safety, and its cultivation of gentility. This body of writing, some of it no doubt economically-minded, recognised that to develop a suburb was to cultivate horticulturally and socially an area which may previously have been, at best, little more than a wasteland, at worst, a stinking swamp

occupied only by piggeries and itinerant thieves, and render it instead a suitable place for respectable living. Landscape gardener Edward Kemp was very much of this opinion.

> It is far from being desirable that only the features of nature should be seen from a small place. The better parts of detached neighbouring houses, good public buildings, places of worship, &c., will, if nicely brought into view, give an air of habitation and sociality to a district. Rows of houses, however, or masses of cottages, will be very unsightly and unsuitable constituents of its landscape.[194]

Reminders of the urban and rural poor - row houses and cottages - were naturally unwelcome in landscapes of 'sociality'. Loudon was not quite so dramatic in voicing approval of the improvement of former suburban wastelands. In 1829, when making his regular calls to gardens in the Home Counties, and the Napoleonic Wars still in his mind, he celebrated the improvement of the suburban landscape as part of the greater improvement of the country as a whole. Loudon's vision was one of national modernisation, led by the horticultural improvement of the suburbs: in 1829,

> No outlet from London has been more improved within the last fifteen years than the road to Edgeware, which from passing through naked grass fields, with, here and there, a miserable cottage, farm-house or hay-barn, is now bordered by villas and gardens, vying with each other in architectural taste, in the display of flowers, exotic trees and shrubs, and in what no foreigner can form an idea of who has not been in the country, English turf and gravel.[195]

In 1840 Loudon published the findings of a tour through those same counties. He began with 15 Kingsbury, the residence of Thomas Harris, Esq:

> Kingsbury which is situated on the Edgeware Road, near the village of that name, may be described as a grass farm, the grounds of which have been ornamented by plantations of select trees and shrubs, and the house enlarged by [...] a large conservatory [...] connected [to] a series of green-houses and hot-houses, containing, as is well known, one of the finest collections of plants in this country, managed by Mr. Beaton, one of our first botanical gardeners.[196]

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[194]Kemp, *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, 1850, pp. 16-17.

[195]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1829, 558.

[196]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 6 (new series), 1840, 233.

In keeping with the spirit of self-congratulation engendered by the anticipated Great Exhibition in all aspects of national progress, an 1851 edition of the *Illustrated London News* ran a feature on the metropolitan improvements achieved between 1800 and 1850: 'At Shooter's Hill, Finchley Common, at Bagshot, and Hounslow Heaths, and at other places in the immediate neighbourhood, then desolate, but now enclosed and adorned with villas and mansions'. Not only were these spaces now more aesthetically pleasing, but 'all the villages about the metropolis are reached with as much ease and safety as any of its principal streets':

> The omnibus [...] a modern mode of conveyance [...] in conjunction with the passage boats on the river, has made our streets practicable. The vehicles which run every minute from the Bank to Charing Cross and extend their journeys to Bow [...] and Kensington or Bayswater [...] which connect Islington with Kennington, and Westminster and Clapham with the foot of Hampstead Hill, have all been brought into use within twenty years [...] All have been beautified as well as amazingly enlarged. The increase of wealth, comfort and convenience, and increase of population, have all gone hand in hand.[197]

Others, as we have seen, had very different ideas. Cobbett had hoped in 1821 that the newly enclosed and developed land between Shooters' Hill and Dartford would eventually revert to its proper state: 'all things will return; these rubbishy flimsy things, on this common, will first be deserted, then crumble down.'[198] No longer confident of such a reversal, an 1866 *Floral World* ran an emotive leader article on the ills of enclosure. 'The oaks are felled, the thousands of acres of furze and broom and holly and blackberry [...] are all "enclosed;" that is to say, stolen.' Hibberd, in one of his more poetic moods, continued in personal vein:

> My heart ached lately as I drove through spots where in years gone by, sylvan beauty entranced the artist and filled the dreamer with new joy, and found instead of gnarled oaks, and clumps of hollies, and cloud-aspiring elm and ash, and a thousand song birds carolling happily, the new villa with its impudent frontage, the newly railed-in garden, robbed without apology from the poor; the wretched line of dirty little shops. The people have been robbed of a precious property, and all the means of innocent and healthy recreation, so needed by the toiling thousands of the great metropolis.[199]

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[197]*Illustrated London News*, January 25 1851, 86.

[198]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830), p. 41.

[199]*Floral World*, 1 (new series), (10), 1866, 292.

Hibberd was not often given to bouts of such revolutionary emotion and it seems that he was piqued not so much by the misappropriation of common land as his own loss of access to a major source of free plants and soils for his garden.[200] He had complained earlier in that year that 'we abhor the course meadow turf to be seen in many of the villa gardens about London' but was uncertain as to the remedy. 'Where', he asked, 'is turf to be had?'

> This is a puzzling question. The commons are being enclosed, and there is scarcely fifty square miles of real good turf left within carting distance of the whole of the towns of England, and about London there is none to be found in a day's journey.[201]

While Hibberd noted that '[i]n fact seed is invariably used now in laying down lawns in grand gardens [...] at the Crystal Palace, Kew, Kensington',[202] he recognised that this method of laying a lawn was prohibitively expensive for the ordinary gardener at this time. Ironically, the desire for a garden which was catalytic to suburban growth had put paid to the inexpensive attainment of its central feature: the perfect lawn. However, regardless of the reasons, the language used by all those who were troubled by the enclosure and development of land beyond the city limits, remained consistent throughout the nineteenth century. Cobbett disapproved even of such building on poor land, meaning that unfit for farming.

> The land, generally speaking, from Deptford to Dartford, is poor, and the surface ugly by nature, to which ugliness there has been made [...] a considerable addition by the inclosure of a common and by the sticking up of some shabby-genteel houses surrounded with dead fences and things called gardens, in all manner of ridiculous forms, making, all together, the bricks, hurdle-rods and earth say [...] "here dwell *vanity* and *poverty*".[203]

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[200]*Ibid.*, 293.

[201]*Floral World*, 1 (4), 1866, 114.

[202]*Ibid.*, 115.

[203]Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1), (1830) p. 41. Incidentally, Hibberd's reference to railing-in and Cobbett's to dead fences and hurdle-rods have the same root. Both disapproved of the practice of marking domestic boundaries with iron and dead wood where once hedges had been planted. Artificial hedges offended both men's agricultural and horticultural sensibilities which placed such stock on growing things; the changing face of the English landscape also unsettled them. Until the late-

Hibberd, unlike the editors of *The Illustrated London News*, did not fear offending his advertisers since those few commercial notices which the *Floral World* did contain were for cheap horticultural books, seeds and implements. His lower-middle-class of suburban readers were not in the market for substantial villas in the outer suburbs. The *ILN*, on the other hand, had a greater circulation and a more financially diverse readership. Advertisements for exclusive properties, even those not built on newly colonised common land, would not have sat easily alongside editorial invective directed against the erection of similar properties. Logically, then, the *ILN* chose to regard suburban expansion as civilising previously dangerous and inconvenient wastelands. A notice in the paper advertising villa residences in Camden Square appeared twice in January 1851, as follows:

> Camden New Town to be let or sold. These houses will be found most desirable either for occupation or investment; the situation is one of the most delightful and elevated in the suburbs of London; the sewerage, roads, and paving are of the best description; the square is contiguous to the railway station, whence trains run daily to the City at all hours. The church is conveniently placed at one end of the square, each house has a private garden in the rear and there is a large enclosed ornamental piece of ground in the centre of the square, for the exclusive use of the inhabitants. Rents from £65 to £130 per annum. Parties in search of a well-built house, in a healthy and highly respectable locality, are requested to view the situation of these villas and the surrounding country.[204]

In April the same year another substantial advertisement was placed for freehold building ground in Wimbledon Park.

> There is no spot within many miles of the metropolis, which possesses so many of the attractive qualities as Wimbledon Park. The commanding situation, the beautiful undulations of the ground, its spacious lake, majestic oaks, and, above all, the general salubrity of the air render it a most desirous spot for the residence of gentlemen in business, the estate is within twenty minutes' ride from London.[205]

Although the *Gardener's Magazine* did not carry commercial advertisements for villa developments, it was instrumental in popularising the desire for suburban or villa living,

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eighteenth century after which railing-in was increasingly fashionable, the word 'fence' had been commonly interchangeable with 'hedge'.

[204]*Illustrated London News*, January 4 1851, 15; January 18 1851, 47.

[205]*Illustrated London News*, April 19 1851, 308.

including in those spa and seaside towns which so disgusted Cobbett only eight years earlier. 'Brighton, like Bath, is a town of enjoyment' wrote an approving Loudon in 1829, and went on to congratulate the middle classes of suburban settler who were improving the uncultivated outskirts of the country's towns.

> As the people of England become more intellectual, they will feel the want of such towns, and another age will see cottages and farm houses clustered together in villages for the sake of social enjoyments as they formerly were for the sake of personal security; and the tradesmen of commercial and manufacturing towns retiring to watering places and towns of enjoyment, instead of excluding themselves in Wales, or in the Highlands of Scotland, or attempting to establish large and extensive hereditary mansions and domains. It is this new and increasing want in the middling classes of society which is the principal cause of the increase of London, and other large towns. Those of limited incomes find they can procure more enjoyment there, because enjoyment, like other articles, is cheapest when most in demand.
>
> The middle rank is also continually increasing in numbers, in consequence of the superior education now given to the sons and daughters of every description of commercial men. Though the first impulse to the prosperity and increase, therefore, was given by the King in establishing a casual residence there, yet the permanent support of so large an assemblage of dwellings will be owing to the great increase in numbers, in intelligence, and in good taste, of the middling classes of society.[206]

Loudon would increasingly conflate middle-class domesticity, suburban development, and villa gardening with civic improvement. The private activities of this 'community of individuals' at home in their gardens was heralded by Loudon, if not other gardener-writers, as patriotic and public-spirited: gardening epitomised the British in peacetime.

As both the symbol and reality of the nineteenth-century middle-class suburban ideal, the villa garden was at once germane to and nourished by the changing face of the modern suburb. In the socially, economically and politically tumultuous years between 1815 and 1914, the garden, like its ideal home, the suburb, was subject to similarly fluctuating change in its 'peacetime suburban design'.[207] However, the desire for that ideal home during the period which one historian suggested 'might well be called the "Great Peace"',[208] remained stable, even when its reality fell short of the popular ideal.

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[206]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1829, 119.

[207]Taylor, *Village in the City*, 1973, p. 20.

[208]David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century 1815-1914*, (Penguin, 1950; 1983 edn.), p. 9.

Commercial and amateur horticulture flourished, its sought after imported exotics now hindered only by a precarious climate and the fickleness of fashion, rather than taxes and war.

As with the suburb, (as both a collective ideal and an individual dwelling place), whose geography is meaningless without plotting its interdependence and interaction with the urban and the rural, so the garden cannot be cut adrift from the house, the city or the country if we are to gain any real sense of its social and political location within nineteenth-century culture and its role in the formation of personal, national and imperial identities. Although the sustained attack upon suburban and middle-class social and material culture appears to have made little impression upon the form or enjoyment of villa life and the opportunities it provided for domestic leisure, I have examined it at length alongside more sympathetic - and realistic - readings, because of its distorting influence upon present day garden histories. Suburban gardens are either excluded from such accounts or are revelled in as a means of revealing all the worst tendencies of emulation and snobbery. This prejudice has left us with an incomplete record of that most familiar area of English geography and has ensured that the snobbery is perpetuated on the part of its readers.

5. 'Home & Garden': Domestic Order and the Suburban Garden.

> The fine lady who has a nosegay put on her table every morning by her gardener, has not a tenth of the enjoyment from it that the lady who has sown the seeds, or struck the cuttings, and watered and shifted, or transplanted, pruned, and tied up, or pegged down, or thinned out, the plants, and at last gathered the flowers herself. But we would have ladies of leisure do a great deal more than this. Let them hoe, and rake, and dig, and work one of Read's garden engines [...] every lady, as well as every gentleman, has a portion of the day that she can call her own, when she may indulge in what she likes.
>
> We insist upon it, therefore, that what we propose is just as suitable and necessary for ladies of the highest rank, as it is for those without rank. ('Review' of Mrs. Loudon's *Instructions in Gardening for Ladies*, *Gardener'sMagazine*, 15, 1840, 351.)

The last chapter considered the garden as a part of the wider suburban landscape and culture, and looked at how representations of this garden operated as a form of shorthand for the presumed identities of their arriviste owners. This chapter looks inwards to the domestic environment and portrays the garden as a complex but integral part of the household environment. It looks at the ways in which the garden was linked, physically and emotionally, to the spaces within the house, and at how the practice of gardening at home helped forge imaginative and intellectual links with the world beyond the garden fence. Stressing the indistinct nature of the boundaries between the inside and outside worlds apparent from personal and novelistic evidence, as well as that reproduced in household manuals and garden guides, offers an opportunity to challenge methodologically the validity of the concept of 'separate spheres' to explain gendered patterns of behaviour and the rooms in which these were held to take place.

The first part of the chapter considers how discrete spaces within the garden acquired distinctively gendered associations and were yet a meeting point for more relaxed attitudes to polite codes of behaviour and family life in general. Through the medium of factual and fictional literature, the first section focuses upon on two aspects of suburban gardening, the flower-garden and the shrubbery, and goes on to show that these implicitly domestic spaces were simultaneously connected with broader cultural practices.

We will see next that 'collecting' for the domestic garden brought the amateur gardener in contact with the language and practice of naturalism, the Picturesque, science and commerce, all of which languages were important cultural currency within respectable and educated circles. The collecting of plants, shells and stones for the decoration of the home and garden belonged to a longer domestic tradition in which the private displays and inconspicuous consumption embodied in women's 'shell-work', cabinets of curiosities and domestic museums were important elements of the fashionable home. Even in the unlikely event that a gardener never moved beyond the confines of his or her plot, then, the web of aesthetic, horticultural, geographical, philosophical, and scientific knowledges inspired and required by the cultivation of a garden, opened up this 'private' domestic space to whole new worlds.

Thirdly, we consider the public worlds of horticulture. That is, the centres of consumption where gardeners went to buy, exhibit or merely browse amidst the latest in fashionable horticulture. Moving between the popular London spectacles of public flower-shows and the quieter but no less impressive environments of the London nurserymen's showrooms, we see how both enterprises exploited the practical necessity of glass and iron conservatories for the culture of exotics for the benefit of the retail horticultural environment and consuming 'experience' in total. We see not only the numbers of women active in these commercial public spheres, but also how the popularity of domestic gardening, and an increased importance attached to things 'domestic' more generally, had a direct influence upon the content and tone of all sorts of horticultural display. By 1851 the influences of the domestic conservatory and the garden were also apparent in successful modern exhibition and retail design. The *Illustrated London News* praised Joseph Paxton's short but logical step 'from the first employment by him of glass to cover the *plants* of all nations, to that of enclosing with the same material the *industrial works* of all nations.'[1]

We then look at how didactic literature cultivated the female gardener between 1815 and 1914. Here, we consider the extent of women's expected gardening activities and the

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[1] *Illustrated London News*, January 4th 1851, 9.

likely extent of their real work in the home landscape of the period. Books, periodicals, and nursery catalogues make up the sources for the first part; periodical correspondence and autobiography provide evidence for the latter.

In the fifth section, 'impolite culture and the villa garden', I show how conventional wisdom about the propriety, decorum and solemnity expected of middle-class Victorian and Edwardian children, as well as their mothers and sisters, even within their own homes, is not borne out by documentary evidence. Even the back garden was not sacrosanct; and the children's and young women's drawings of their garden activities here do not seem to have involved growing plants for the educational or religious reasons advocated by the increasing numbers of gardening books for children in the period.

We remain in the 'private sphere' for the penultimate section and look at how the garden could operate as a kind of refuge within a home environment that was often made intrusively public. We will see that because both the middle-class home and its neighbourhood could be noisy, populous and overburdened with callers and visitors, the back garden was expected to afford much needed privacy.

The chapter concludes with a selection of writings which show how gardens featured as significant spaces in the making of personal and familial identities. The shape of the garden was, in such cases, retrospectively unimportant compared with the reasons for which it was remembered. It was the backdrop before which both mundane and extraordinary events were played out. Gardens were at once a stable presence and a hot-bed of progress and change. The spiritual, even primeval, qualities imbued in a garden, whatever its physical form, rendered it a place of reflection and contemplation, and a provider, then as now, of solace. The garden in this final section functioned as a metaphysical place against which the passing of time and lives were measured.

5.1. Flower-Gardens and Shrubberies: 'open-air drawing-rooms' and 'nests of coolness'.

Traditionally, flower gardens or parterres were laid out close to the house, so that scent and colour were immediately appreciable from within the home. In a chapter on the parterre, for example, Maria Jacson wrote that 'the common, or Mingled Flower-Garden should be situated so as to form an ornamental appendage to the house; and where the plan of ground will admit, placed before windows exposed to a southern or south-east aspect.'[2] This 'small gay parterre, which lay below the parlour windows', was the first area of the archetypal villa garden which nineteenth-century prescriptive texts placed under the supervision of women and girls. Commercial literature also recognised that the flower garden and terrace were women's special concern. E. G. Henderson & Sons' Wellington Nursery, St. John's Wood, distributed a catalogue which recommended that 'every lady amateur cultivator may superintend and personally manage the slight attentions required to preserve the terrace margins or velvet lawn in the highest condition.'[3] Like the drawing-room with which it was intimately connected, the flower-garden was a place which the woman of the house would 'superintend and personally manage' (figs. 5.5-5.6 and 5.7-5.8); in fact, illustrations throughout the period suggested that ladies were better able to manage the garden than were gentlemen (figs. 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11). But it was also a place where men and women might meet to walk, converse or dance (fig. 5.4). But it was primarily the domain of women, girls and younger boys who used it as a day room and, at night, as a room for withdrawing into when the men were left to their post-prandial habits; contemporary codes of conduct advised that men might join a female party in the drawing-room by invitation but not by right.

The garden historian Mavis Batey has noted how at the turn of the eighteenth century Humphry Repton had been anxious to adapt the interior of the house to the more

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[2]Maria Elizabetha Jacson (or Marie Jackson), *A Florist's Manual: Hints for a Gay Flower-Garden* , (1816; Henry Colburne and Co., 1822 edn.), p. 2.

[3]*Floral World*, 2 (3), 1859, 64.

informal kind of living space made possible by opening it to the garden. Accordingly, both 'house and garden became increasingly united in the Regency period, beginning with what Repton called,' in 1814,

> the modern improvement, borrowed from the French, of folding glass doors opening into a garden, by which the effect in a room is like that of a tent or marquee, and in summer delightful.[4]

In line with this more relaxed domestic environment, contemporary sources show that by the early-nineteenth century the ideal villa was comprised equally of house and garden. This was undoubtedly assisted by the growing popularity of 'glass doors' or French-windows and conservatories, which helped dissolve the physical barriers between inside and outside by their axial position at the threshold (figs. 5.1-5.2 and 5.12-5.13). Jane Austen's positioning of a 'young woman, pretty, lively', on the threshold of *Mansfield Park* (1814) was doubly symbolic: she, 'placed near *a window, cut down to the ground, and opening on a little lawn*, surrounded by shrubs in the rich foliage of summer, was enough to catch any man's heart'.[5] Both the woman and the house were on the threshold of change. Fifty years later, when Shirley Hibberd wrote that his greenhouse at Stoke Newington was 'a part and parcel of the garden, and yet not utterly separated from the dwelling house'[6] he, too, was thinking in terms as much ethereal as material. Most writers, however, stressed the physical benefits of linking house to garden in this way. William Paul's *Handbook of Villa Gardening* (1855) addressed itself to the owners of the 'villas innumerable [which] have sprung up on every side' of 'London, and the large and wealthy towns in England'. Paul ran a nursery at Waltham Cross, Essex, and was naturally anxious to promote the well-planted garden as a domestic requisite. Thus he insisted that '[t]he Garden' was 'one of the chief appendages' of the villa, and that '[i]t is rare indeed that a house of any pretensions is without a garden. Modern requirements pronounce it as necessary to comfort as the drawing-room or library.'[7]

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[4]Mavis Batey, *Regency Gardens*, (Princes Risborough, Bucks: Shire Garden History 7, 1995), p. 22.

[5]Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (1814; Wordsworth Editions, 1992), p. 47.

[6]*Floral World*, 1 (new series), (1), 1866, 1.

[7]William Paul, *The Handbook of Villa Gardening*, (Piper, Stephenson and Spence, 1855), p. ii.

If the flower-garden was generally held to be a feminine place, the shrubbery and pleasure-grounds were usually described as being the province of gentlemen. Women were not excluded from these areas but their peripheral geography was more readily associated with masculine modes of rational leisure as they were traditionally conceived. In the same way that the flower-garden had its internal counterpart in the drawing-room, the pleasure-ground and shrubbery were frequently affiliated to the library, dining-room and smoking-room, even though the former occupied the garden's perimeter. According to Loudon in 1833, the library 'should present a great contrast to the light elegance of the drawing room' and 'the whole appearance of the room ought to be that of masculine importance [...] massive and simple'.[8] However, as Robert Kerr explained in *The Gentleman's House* (1864), the library was not 'in the sole sense a repository of books [...] It is primarily a sort of morning-room for gentlemen [...] At the same time the ladies are not entirely excluded'.[9] Unlike the drawing-room and flower-garden, then, the 'masculine' spaces within the domestic landscape were not physically united. Even in a very small garden where the division of space was notional (few moderately sized homes could boast a library or pleasure-grounds) the ties between masculine spaces were held more through association rather than any directly conceived link.

Domestic Thresholds and the Novel.

Fictional writing reinforced the association of the flower-garden as a site of feminine interest, while the sights of husbands, fathers and elder brothers supposedly extended further afield. Like the offices within the nineteenth-century middle-class home, the geography of 'outdoor rooms' was coloured by the gender of those most associated with them. These were absolutely not rigidly observed demarcations, but thresholds to be respected, especially on formal occasions when guests were

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[8]John Claudius Loudon, *The Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*, (1833), p. 1051.

[9]Quoted in Peter Thornton, *Authentic Decor: The Domestic Interior, 1620-1920*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984; 1983 edn.), p. 220.

entertained, by both the men and the women and children. Observance of these thresholds by a party was crucial to the elaborate courtship rituals of the Victorian middle classes. So also, however, were the crossings of thresholds. Whether illicit or condoned, the transgression of boundaries for meetings in areas 'out of bounds' or 'beyond the pale', conferred a publicly-acknowledged ritual significance to moments of physical and romantic engagement in the otherwise private areas of the domestic garden, areas which were also intended for private contemplation and 'picturesque solitude' (fig. 5.3). Shirley Hibberd deemed that 'No parlour fancies of propriety should check me here' of the 'nests of coolness' found in the garden's shrubbery and wilderness areas.[10]

These themes are examined through a variety of garden books and household guides and a selection of contemporary novels. As Michael Waters' research demonstrates, '[o]f the roughly 40,000 novels which the Victorians produced, the majority are domestic novels', and the majority of those were devoted to the middle and upper classes at home, surrounded by their gardens, which, in turn, provided a stage for the characters and a prompt for the novelist. Consequently the garden's ontological status as 'both everyday place and other world' 'lies at the heart of its functional significance' in imaginative literature - and at the core of this thesis, perhaps especially as it relates to women's experience of home in the period between 1815 to 1914.[11]

Located outside of the immediate vicinity of the house, the pleasure-grounds and shrubbery, like the flower-garden, were areas of the grounds into which visitors' entry was monitored. Witness Sir Walter's reluctance, in Austen's *Persuasion* (1818), to grant 'a tenant of Kellynch Hall any extraordinary favour':

> Supposing I were induced to let my house, I have by no means made up my mind as to the privileges to be annexed to it [...] the park would be open to him of course [...] But what restrictions I might impose on the use of the pleasure-grounds, is another thing. I am not fond of the idea of my shrubberies being always

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[10]Shirley Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, (Groombridge, 1856; 1857), pp. 414, 415.

[11]Michael Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature*, (Scholar Press, 1988), p. 223.

> approachable; and I should recommend Miss Elliot to be on her guard with respect to the flower-garden.[12]

Such restrictions on movement across boundaries tempted the trespasser. For many writers in the period the home offered a familiar arena in which to work out larger and less polite themes than its environment might immediately suggest. In the garden these themes often became tangled with issues of sexuality in ways impossible to conceive of within the domestic interior. This owed less to the long-established metaphorical links between gardens and female sexuality and more to the reader's anticipation of the unpredictable beyond the French-doors. Anthony Trollope used the idea of threshold crossing as a structural device to great effect in the last of his Barchester novels, *The Small House at Allington* (1862-64), in which a large part of the narrative occurs between the gardens and the drawing-room. Invited into the 'bliss of their own domestic circle' each character's entry marked a significant development in the plot:

> Shall we go into the drawing-room' said [Lily], feeling that she would be in some degree safer there than out among the shrubs and paths of the garden. And I think she was right in this. A man will talk of love out among the lilacs and roses, who would be struck dumb by the demure propriety of the four walls of a drawing-room. John Ames also had some feeling of this kind, for he determined to remain out in the garden if he could so manage it.[13]

Thus the garden had its private places as the house had its public rooms; both had interlocking areas which might be subject to several interpretation by those who moved within them. These interpretations might be in accord with or opposed to the social niceties of the time. The prevailing tone of didactic literature which advised on proper behaviour within polite circles, particularly on conduct between the sexes, is not a reliable guide to actual practice. Indeed, it may indicate the exact reverse: the quietly insistent distinction made between ladies' flower-gardens and gentlemen's shrubberies may have been calculated to separate too intimate a coalescence of the 'spheres'. Evangelically-guided authors probably understood all too well the sorts of intimate

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[12]Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, (1818; Wordsworth Classics, 1993), p. 14.

[13]Anthony Trollope, *The Small House at Allington*, (1862-1864; Penguin Popular Classics, 1995), pp. 204-205.

coalescence which Trollope - and many others - observed within the shadowy privacy of the shrubbery or summer-house (figs. 5.14 and 5.15). Waters explains that

> Lawns provided Victorian novelists with ideal settings for social rituals and interpersonal exchanges of the more leisurely and "overt" kinds. For the staging of private and secret encounters, writers turned to other popular features of the larger garden: in particular to shrubberies, summer-houses and conservatories.[14]

The 'separate spheres' theory which genders activities according to the places in which they occur does not sit easily here, being too rigid a structure to account for the movement between the two. Lawrence Klein has suggested that although

> most historians agree that over the course of the eighteenth century, and more insistently in the nineteenth, a private and a public sphere were constructed ideologically and endowed with gender and class meaning [...] the degree to which in practice families actually adhered to "separate spheres" ideology remains the subject of much debate.[15]

Further, 'the "public" and the "private" were [...] aligned with the differences between openness and secrecy, between transparency and opaqueness',[16] which were then subject to transgression and trespass, regardless of whether the acts were ever witnessed. An article by Hibberd in a *Floral World* of 1865 entitled 'Plant Collecting' indicated that the complex and impalpable nature of public/private distinctions in the home landscape was understood implicitly.

> In every garden there should be so much green turf, so much shrub and tree, so much floral colouring, for it is a place of resort for families and friends; it is in some measure public property, especially if overlooked; and the possessor is morally bound to make it reasonably pleasing, not only to himself, but to his kindred connections, and, in a certain limited sense of the word, to all mankind.[17]

Hibberd could of course be accused, like William Paul, of attempting to profit from such declarations. But his advice was persuasive; in maintaining that 'there may be no

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[14]Waters, *Garden in Victorian Literature*, 1988, p. 266.

[15]Lawrence E. Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (1), 1995, (97-109), 101.

[16]Klein, *Gender and the Public/Private Distinction*, 1995, 104.

[17]*Floral World*, 8 (10), 1865, 220.

harm in saying that gardens are to some extent subject to the laws which regulate the interiors of houses,' he made a strong case for the linking of house and garden in the period. Interestingly, although he had presented the domestic garden as a site of public display, he defended the adornment of both the domestic interior and exterior against accusations of emulative and conspicuous consumption. He protested that '[it] is not extravagant outlay, it is not mere display and the outshining of all neighbours, that renders a garden an additional item in making up the sum of domestic happiness.' And, although he concluded that the 'cultivator of flowers, the very private and unassuming decorator of a garden, which serves as an open-air drawing room, dancing-saloon, playground, and ever changing picture needs some sort of system to make the best of his pleasure - *systematic collection*,' Hibberd added the proviso that 'the passion for collecting should never be allowed to mar the beauty of the garden itself'.[18]

5.2. Private Display: Garden Culture and Cultures of Collecting.

By the mid- to late-eighteenth century, shrubberies had developed along similar lines to the cabinets of curiosities favoured by the gentlemen amateurs of previous generations. Collections of exotic specimens, laid out by botanical type or by geographical origin displayed both their creator's knowledge of the natural sciences and his commitment to hobbies of intellectual rigour. Like the natural history museum to which it was conceptually related, the shrubbery was 'both useful and ornamental' and had 'a contemporary cultural and intellectual significance beyond the natural objects themselves.'[19] Although the collecting of specimen plants, like the collecting of animal and mineral specimens, was traditionally associated with gentlemen's amateur museology, it was never an exclusively masculine pursuit, and nor was it exclusively

[18]*Ibid.*, 220-221, emphasis mine.

[19]Charles W. J. Withers, '"Both Useful and Ornamental," John Walker's Keepership of Edinburgh University's Natural History Museum, 1779-1803', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 5 (1), 1993, (65-77), 65.

seen to be so. It would seem that women considered their garden plant collections in much the same way as did their fellow gardener-curators during the early-nineteenth century.

A letter written by John Graham from school at Harrow during 1810, for instance, reveals not only that he envied his sister Anne's holiday naturalising at Rottingdean, near Brighton; but also that he considered his and his brother Tom's attempts at window-gardening and the gardening of the three other sisters in Clapham, to be of the same nature as Anne's pursuit of natural history on the beach. Note how easily John associated his 'rage' for cultivating common-place pot-plants with his sister's assorted collection of natural history curiosities and how these were connected logically with the globes she made for their domestic museum display. 'June 10 1810, Harrow', 'My dear Anne', began John,

> - I should like of all things to join in your nice walks on the beach, I hope you will both bring home loads of Seaweeds, Shells and Curiosities, to grace our Cabinet & Mantelpieces, as well as a superb pair of globes which you seem to manufacture so famously.
>
> Tom and I have now got a rage for plants, and I have got a very nice row in our window, consisting of 3 geraniums, 3 pinks, & 2 pots of mignonette, 2 superb bow pots over our fire place. According to the girls' account our gardens flourish delightfully at Clapham, & almost all the seeds are come up.[20]

Even gardening on a small scale, then, could link the domestic environment with the imagined geography of the wider world. So-called window-gardens effectively connected the house with this expanded sphere, with the result that while domestic influences permeated the external world, external influences were simultaneously filtering into the domestic interior.

Treating of gardens as repositories for collections of natural history had long been the pattern set by botanic gardens. By the mid- to late-eighteenth century it had become the fashionable practice, albeit on a reduced scale, in domestic grounds and would continue to be so, in modified form, throughout the nineteenth century. Many

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[20]Minet Library, Graham-Polhill Papers, IV/4, 55. Letter to A. Graham, Rottingdean, Brighton from John Graham, Harrow; June 10th 1810.

owners of large rural estates had established arboreta by this time. For interested parties in other classes, however, collecting the world's trees together would prove both financially and spatially prohibitive. The pinetum, an arboretum for the genus coniferae, became a feasible alternative for the wealthier echelons of the middle class because it allowed the cultivation of a 'select' group of the newest exotics and made a 'specialist' of the amateur at home in his garden: 'City magnates found the more limited, the more select, pinetum a very desirable social and horticultural substitute' for the elite's arboreta.[21] These living collections, of course, were never intended solely for edifying purposes, domestic forests, however small, offered more exciting possibilities than study. Faced with an awe-inspiring array of plants to choose from, however, the contemporary gardener was able to impose some sort of order upon his collection, present his attachment to a particular group of plants as scientifically orientated rather than financially constrained, and still lay claims to an ornamental garden fit for social and family functions.

One of the first articles published by the *Gardener's Magazine* in 1826 recommended that private gardens might be improved by the application of a method recently introduced at the Horticultural Society's gardens near Turnham Green, Chiswick:

> A collection of single specimens arranged [...] following each other in natural relationship bordering a revolving walk, as in Messrs. Loddiges arboretum, and named with glazed china tickets, as in Mr. Boursault's garden in Paris, or Mrs. Beaumont's conservatory at Bretton Hall, would form an easy and agreeable source, for ladies to acquire a practical knowledge of botany.[22]

A *Magazine* editorial of the following year expatiated upon the 'Natural Arrangement of Plants' in the home garden as a means of advancing modern botany. Characteristically, Loudon had a greater agenda and used the opportunity to lecture on the improvement of 'taste' in garden design; he also had designs on public taste more generally:

> if it is found worthwhile to have a few plants, it will be found worth while to have those few the most important in point of scientific

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[21]Geoffrey Taylor, *The Victorian Flower Garden*, (Skeffington, 1952), p. 150.

[22]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 1, 1826, 344.

> interest [...] this is to prefer a superior principle of selection to an ordinary principle, to exhibit a taste of the highest and most intellectual kind, instead of the inferior motives of show, extent, or even rarity or price.[23]

After allowing that these 'motives should not be despised' because 'they may lead progressively to that higher degree of excellence', Loudon rounded on the ills of mixing species even in domestic gardens. He employed flattery to win over his readers while also haranguing them, and concluded his remarks by obliquely acknowledging their elevated gardening status. Loudon implied that his readers were educated amateurs who gardened for pleasure and edification rather than payment; they did not make their livings in 'trade'.

> Now, the chief effect of mixing flowers in beds, borders, or shrubberies, or exotics on shelves or stages, is to surprise and confound [...] it is low on the scale of taste. It may be suitable to minds in a certain state of cultivation; and there can be no question of its convenience to a dealer either in plants or books, who has not a very numerous assortment.[24]

Most ordinary gardeners' attempts at displaying their plant collections would rarely meet with the botanical precision demanded by the press, as 'the incongruous mixtures and unmeaning medleys that are every where to be seen in gardens' in 1840 made perfectly clear.[25] Gardening according to such rigidly applied rules was usually the province of the scientist and nurseryman. However, because certain groups of plants demanded the same cultural conditions to flourish, the aesthetically successful amateur garden would indeed have some botanical order imposed upon it by nature. If the resulting collection had the gloss of botanical correctness, however, it did not follow that it had been established, or was enjoyed on the basis of, such laudable adherence to the horticultural fashion for 'scientific' domestic gardens. Garden displays of particular species could acquire the label scientific for other accidental reasons. Chrysanthemums, for example, were not collected merely for their novelty, nor for their ability to produce autumn colour, rare in hardy

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[23]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 2, 1827, 300-301.

[24]*Ibid.*, 310-311.

[25]Alexander Forsyth, 'On Certain prevailing Errors in laying out and managing Flower-Gardens', *Gardener'sMagazine*, 6 (new series), 1840, 255.

flowers at that time. They were indispensable flowers for gardeners battling with urban pollution, and favourites of the florist:

> [T]o the London Amateur the Chrysanthemum is endeared by its tractable disposition; for amidst the fogs and smoke of this modern Babylon it will somehow or other manage to produce its blossoms, making many a suburban garden gay, which would otherwise be bare in dull, dark and dreary November.[26]

'Familiar as "Household Words" are the names of his pets [chrysanthemums] to the London amateur, and some can go through a whole collection and tell them by their foliage and style of growth.'[27] When the *Floral World* reported that 'it happens that botanical systems of grouping generally accord with the demands of pictorial taste', leaving cultural constraints unsaid, it allowed gardeners in certain inner, polluted and lower-class areas, the liberty of claiming artistically and botanically tasteful gardens.[28]

Hibberd soon rejected the scientific arrangement of plants as deleterious to English garden design. His reasoning was supported by that perennially favourite qualification of those criticising house and garden design. He decreed that 'massing' suggested the poor taste of the middling-rank backwoodsman, who had no sense of moderation:

> There is too great a rage for massing; and often-times the taste is not a whit better than that of the old farmer at the rent dinner, who, after tasting a thimbleful of maraschino, called the waiter, and said, "young mon, bring me a lot o' that stuff in a moog."[29]

Hibberd's opinions were mercurial at the best of times, but those expressed on the subject of art and science in the garden suggest that he was in torment over the correct balance between the two. Only three months after stating that 'botanical relationships are of no consequence', he would publish an article on the 'Colouring of the Parterre' which maintained that '[t]here is almost no line of demarcation between art and science, for what is in correct taste is also in accord with scientific principles.'[30] This

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[26]*Gossip for the Garden*, 8, (March), 1863, 87.

[27]*Ibid.*

[28]*Floral World*, 8 (2), 1865, 29.

[29]*Floral World*, 5 (new series), (1), 1870, 15.

[30]*Floral World*, 5 (4), 1870, 108.

compromise, like his concluding remark, was not especially unconvincing. 'Everyone must be his own artist, a task not difficult where private and public horticulture is carried to such an extent as in the present day'.[31]

5.3. Men, Women and the Public Face of Horticulture.

One consequence of studying women's involvement with gardening in the domestic environment has been a revelation of the extent of their activities connected with the public realms of horticulture. Nursery catalogues and gardening magazines tell us that women were regularly purchasing and exhibiting plants as well as keen attendants of the major London flower-shows. Commercial nurserymen's showrooms, seedsmen's shops, public flower-shows and horticultural exhibitions not only supplied gardeners with tangible services such as materials and practical information, they also functioned as social and cultural foci to individual amateurs gardening in the suburbs and beyond (figs. 5.16-5.18). While horticultural periodicals could operate as virtual gardening clubs and family letters as imagined links in a chain of collective gardening between different plots, the commercial and public horticultural emporia provided a fixed point of reference amidst an increasingly dispersed gardening community. The fact that these emporia tended to be geographically central to the suburban gardening community only emphasised their attraction to otherwise peripheral gardens and gardeners.

Floral Bazaars and Flower Shows.

Commercial enterprises offered year-round horticultural attractions in their landscaped conservatories and grounds. Although spectacular, however, the nursery shows were losing ground by mid-century to seasonally produced flower-shows. Because the leading shows were held at such fashionable places as the Royal Botanic Gardens at Regent's Park, or the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, the events were venues for lovers of spectacle as well as lovers of flowers. Nevertheless, the press accredited a large part of the nation's horticultural success to the influence of these institutions and their shows. *Gossip*

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[31] *Ibid.*, 117.

for the Garden, the self-professed champion of 'Gardening for the Million', even praised the influence of the 'parent society' of horticulture for collecting together the products of geographically, aesthetically and functionally diverse gardens. In 1857 it told readers that

> There cannot exist in the mind of any reasonable being a doubt that the rapid improvement in gardening, which has taken this country in late years, is due - in no inconsiderable degree - to the institution of the numerous societies, whose object it is to bring together the various productions of the garden.[32]

The popularity of these national events with the 'ton' encouraged the establishment of other shows and societies designed to capture less wealthy participants and their audiences. In 1865 the *Floral World* proposed founding a new horticultural society to serve gardeners 'in the rural districts comprised in a radius of twenty miles from St. Paul's'. Such a society would 'facilitate the meeting together, in some central position, of cultivators of all classes from east, west, north, and south':

> The immense increase in the number of amateur cultivators of plants, flowers, and fruits in the suburbs of the metropolis, and the non-recogni - of these by the great societies which, for the most part determine the fashion for exhibiting, and minister to the horticultural proclivities of the wealthy classes, render it necessary that some effort should be made to afford to florists and pomologists resident in the vicinity of London some means of comparing their productions.[33]

The result was the United Horticultural Society, founded April 1865.[34] The Society's first 'Gardeners' Meeting', 'devoted to an examination of novelties and curiosities', recorded that 'the committee have obtained permission to hold the exhibition on the lawn in the beautiful garden of Finsbury Circus',[35] 'through the kind intercession of Alfred Smee, Esq., FRS,' who kept a house in Finsbury Circus to be near to his office. The Directors of the Finsbury Circus Garden, including Smee, had successfully campaigned to prevent its destruction by the Metropolitan Railway in 1862, on account of the shrubs and trees which 'carry up large quantities of water into the over-dried atmosphere, and this little forest of

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[32]*Gossip for the Garden*, 2 (July), 1857, 308.

[33]*Floral World*, 8 (2), 1865, 31.

[34]Initially, it made temporary headquarters at Albion Hall, London Wall, Moorgate because there was 'nought else suitable at present'.

[35]*Floral World*, 8 (6), 1865, 122.

trees must play an important part in the neighbourhood'. Smee, Medical Officer to the Bank of England, was no doubt keen to establish the Circus, the largest open space in the City at that time, as an occasional meeting place for fashionable amusements in order to keep the railway at bay.[36] What better way to plant the idea of the Gardens' indispensability to the this suburban community and the City, than the institution of a summer horticultural exhibition? He would later publish in *My Garden: its Plan and Culture* (1872),[37] a description of his country garden at Wallington Bridge, Teddington, Surrey, which supplied the Finsbury town house with its fruit and vegetables. Less than ten miles from St. Paul's, Smee's country house was well within the twenty mile radius recommended for membership of the United Horticultural Society. Its first exhibition at Finsbury Circus Gardens, normally a private space belonging to the surrounding stucco terraces which had only tiny gardens of their own, was accompanied by a 'military band and all the usual military festivities.'[38]

There were also regular, smaller, and less feted flower shows held at venues scattered all over London. In 1865, the *Floral World* was recommending that

> the best of the metropolitan exhibitions was at the Agricultural Hall [Islington], and the worst was at [RHS] South Kensington. Stoke Newington, Brixton, Kennington, Camden Town, the Tower Hamlets, and other districts of the metropolis, have had their several displays, and everywhere full justice has been done.[39]

Among the better known of London's small provincial shows were those held at The Horns tavern at Kennington Park, home to the South London Metropolitan Society, the Assembly Rooms attached to the Rosemary Branch public house at Peckham, and at the

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[36]See Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibberd, *The London Encyclopaedia*, (MacMillan, 1983), p. 310.

[37]Alfred Smee, *My Garden: its Plan and Culture*, (Bell and Daldy, 1872). Smee's book was copiously illustrated by a Mr. Robertson. One engraving not by Robertson's hand, however, was the one of Shirley Hibberd's greenhouse at Stoke Newington reproduced in the *Floral World*. Smee's note that 'Mr. Robertson has very faithfully rendered it in his drawing' was probably a joke indicating that he and Hibberd were friends.

[38]Later in the year the new society made arrangements to hold its autumn shows at the Guildhall, *Floral World*, 8 (11), 1865, 345.

[39]*Floral World*, 8 (1), 1865, 1.

Manor Rooms in Stoke Newington.[40] These inner suburban shows were sophisticated events, even if the venues were lacking in comfort and extent. One division of the south-London suburb of Brixton, for instance, had its own society, and a glance at *Stanford's Library Map* of 1862, indicates why (fig. 5.19). 'This flourishing Society held its Summer show at Mr. Hill's Horticultural Implement Depot, Brixton Hill, and it was eminently successful' even though the *Floral World* considered that 'the place in which it was held was not altogether the best for the purpose'.[41]

The horticultural press liked to suggest that the success of flower-shows and nurserymen's rooms was a direct reflection of England's enviable superiority in all matters domestic. This was the reason why 'Floricultural Societies prosper and increase,' it reasoned, and why 'such an evidence of the healthiness of domestic life in England is satisfactory in more senses than one'. In essence, 'societies for the encouragement of horticulture are by their very nature civilising' because 'Gardening makes men domestic'.[42] Horticultural societies encouraged the national passion for horticulture, horticulture itself inculcated civility and domestic sensibilities and, to complete the cycle, horticultural exhibitions were heralded as a signal of the nation's innate domesticity. The complex affiliations between horticulture and domesticity were thus extended from the individual private garden of the amateur to the floral exhibitions of the nation. An example of how public displays were invested with something of that domestic spirit was recorded approvingly in a *Floral World* of 1870. At the Royal Botanic Society's gardens, Regent's Park,

> The collection of living economic plants now contains specimens of all the spices and condiments in domestic use, most of the tropical esculent fruits, and many of those from which furniture and other woods are obtained, the principal gums and medicinal products, and the poison trees of Brazil and Madagascar.[43]

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[40]See for example, *Floral World*, 2 (12), 1859, 267.

[41]*Floral World*, 4 (10), 1861, 215-216.

[42]*Floral World*, 3 (5), 1860, 89-90.

[43]*Floral World*, 5 (1), 1870, 27.

Visitors to these Botanic Gardens were encouraged to see the importance of economic botany to household economy, as well as to the less immediately tangible worlds of tropical medicine, shipping and industry. At the same time, special categories for female gardeners were introduced into the flower shows. At the Botanic Society's Spring Show of 1870, Princess Mary headed a Special Division 'awarding prizes for fern cases, flower-baskets, &c.' Because many of the male gardeners were professionals entering on behalf of their male and female employers, there was also 'a gold medal, devoted to ladies, for bouquets, table design, and Window-Boxes', which was strictly for amateurs.[44] The so-called private worlds of the home and garden were beginning to exert their influence upon the public worlds of science.

In an article taken from the national daily press, *Gossip for the Garden* recorded the Summer flower- and fruit-show held at the Exhibition of the Horticultural Society of London's garden, Chiswick, in 1857. '13,000 people were attracted by the occasion, including her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cambridge, and a considerable proportion of the elite of the metropolis and the surrounding neighbourhood, among whom the number of ladies greatly preponderated.'[45] Subsequent shows and exhibitions noted a similar preponderance of women (fig. 5.16). By 1864, Shirley Hibberd could remark with characteristic good humour that 'navigation amidst the vortex of silks and muslin [was now] extremely perilous.' Although the popularity of floral displays had grown to such an extent in and around London at this date he considered that as of now 'no place is so suitable for a rose show on a grand scale as the Crystal Palace.' He continued to patronise all the London shows and many of the provincial ones, but his new preference was decided by the

> greater space for moving round the tables or for escaping from the crush, than is to be met with elsewhere; a consideration of no mean importance in these days of huge hoops and voluminous skirts with which our belles delight to adorn themselves on sight-seeing occasions, to the manifest discomfiture of the coarser order of the creation.[46]

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[44]*Floral World*, 5 (3), 1870, 83.

[45]*Gossip for the Garden*, 2 (July), 1857, 249.

[46]*Floral World*, 7 (8), 1864, 174.

Middle- and upper-class women, then, were visibly active participants in the public horticultural scene. Indeed some of the seasonal flower-shows seem to have been more than usually representative of women's public consumption. Although these spaces were clearly associated with flowers, they were not the quiet, 'ladylike' venues that are often equated with feminine diversions. In fact, the main shows - we can only guess at the character of those at provincial public houses and tea-rooms - seem to have had more the quality of a rout than the place of repose suggested in such titles as 'repositories of floral arts'.

Nurserymen's Showrooms.

Nurserymen's showrooms were reported a little differently from the flower-shows and were seen by most journalists and commentators as a mediating influence between the tranquillity desirable in a private garden and the popular excesses of the 'floral bazaar' (fig. 5.18). Although the *Floral World* eagerly reported all such excesses, it maintained its support for the longer-established nurseries.

> Great public shows at Kensington [RHS], Regent's Park, Crystal Palace, and elsewhere, have their several merits; they dazzle the senses, and quicken that sense of enjoyment which is peculiar to sight seeing where there are great crowds. But in a well got up nursery show there is enjoyment of another sort; if we see less as to quantity, we see much greater advantage for the improving of our notions and for putting to the proof the respective claims of varieties and modes of culture.[47]

In March 1863, the Cutbush Nursery opened its Exhibition of Spring Flowers in Highgate, north of London. 'Visitors,' advised the *Floral World*, 'will find plenty worth seeing at Highgate.' But because such nurseries were less crowded, and paid equal attention to the culture and the display of plants, they were considered rather more refined than the Crystal Palace's and other flower-shows. Even though Cutbush's Hyacinth House was described as being, for a fortnight, 'as bright as the Alhambra, and the colours of the pyramids of bloom as skilfully harmonized for general effect, as the best works of the best days of the Arabesque', the *Floral World* was pleased to observe that 'Messrs. Cutbush [have]

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[47]*Floral World*, 6 (4), 1863, 77.

manage[d], very happily to combine the elegances of drawing-room entertainment with a real lesson of inestimable value to the practicals'.[48] And, after examining the 400 varieties on show at the nursery it noted, significantly, that 'the hyacinth house has been daily crowded with visitors, and, thanks to the spirited proprietors, the London people have had within a short distance of home a *free* feast of flowers'.[49] Although William Robinson took exception to these displays, and refused to enter the more gaudy establishments, his 'caution to ladies against taking as an example [...] the hideous ungraceful-looking *sets* [...] to be seen in some London [nursery] windows',[50] bore witness to the theatrical associations which even the more 'respectable' nurseries shared with crystal palaces.

Capitalising upon the multiple attraction of shopping and science, the horticultural industry presented opportunities for recreational consumption in fashionable environments. In spite of their domestic associations, the nature of the exhibits could be construed as encouraging the more intellectual associations which the nursery environment shared with the museum, and zoological and botanical gardens. These establishments, like the increasing number of quasi-scientific ventures for public edification, were calculated to entertain as well as enlighten. Advertisements for the Surrey Zoological Gardens at Camberwell, or the Aquaria at the Crystal Palace, for example, apparently highlighted their flower-shows and tea-rooms at the expense of the zoological collections. Because of the naturally overlapping functions of such spaces with flower-shows and nursery showrooms, it is neither possible nor safe to make distinctions between popular spectacle, leisured consumption, and scientific study. Altogether, the extent, appearance, and several functions of the commercial nursery environment, what we might call the economics of leisure and learning, were not so much indistinct as interdependent. While the long-established nursery trade borrowed from the success of the newer arenas for experiencing the unalloyed pleasures of consumption, the new winter gardens, crystal palaces and all

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[48]*Ibid.*

[49]*Floral World*, 3 (4), 1860, 68-69. Emphasis mine.

[50]William Robinson, 'Ladies Flowers', *Floral World*, 1 (new series) (1), 1866, 22. Emphasis mine.

manner of other glass environments, were also influenced by the older commercial conservatories.

Oddly, perhaps, the one organisation which we might have expected to adopt this eclectic policy, deliberately avoided doing so in order to protect its scientific reputation. Although Loudon had once called it 'that great emporium of intercourse and novelties',[51] the London Horticultural Society disapproved of what it considered to be the trivialisation of and interference with the profession by private and commercial enterprise, and distanced itself politically and geographically from the main centres of luxury consumption noted below. Complaining to the *Gardener's Magazine* in 1827 about 'regulations for the admission &c. of labourers into the garden of the Horticultural Society at Chiswick', an anonymous contributor demanded 'Pray are there as many regulations for the clerks in Regent Street?' You 'must be aware,' he wrote,

> that they are held in derision by all the nurserymen and master gardeners about London who know anything about them, and laughed at by the young men themselves [...] The whole classification and rules and regulations published respecting the garden, and the subscribers and non-subscribers, &c. &c. I pronounce to be in contracted and illiberal spirit, and unworthy of Englishmen.[52]

When 'Lady Patronesses' were first proposed for the Anniversary Fete at the Chiswick gardens in 1828, for a public breakfast rather than a dinner, Loudon noted that 'objections, however, have been taken to this fete, as a misappropriation of the garden, and as *degrading it to the rank of a place of public amusement*.'[53] Reviewing the 'other letters on the subject', he observed how they

> attempt[ed] to ridicule the idea of combining Kensington Gardens, Vauxhall, and Bagnigge Wells, in what the writer says should be exclusively devoted to science, and be supported on the principles of utility, and not be rendered dependent in any degree on fashion.

Loudon did not comment on this statement; he merely added that despite all these misgivings, 'the price of tickets for ladies is complained of, and also the limitation of

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[51] *Gardener's Magazine*, 1, 1826, 2.

[52] *Gardener's Magazine*, 2, 1827, 5.

[53] *Gardener's Magazine*, 3, 1828, 108-109, emphases mine.

the number of ladies to *one*'.[54] James Stratton Carpenter MD, an American Quaker doctor visiting Friends in London was not much impressed with either the area or the Society's gardens when he saw them in the summer of 1836. He did, however, concede that the 'fashionable' made the effort to migrate seasonally to the gardens there:

> Turnham Green 5 miles from London, near which are the horticultural gardens, is a little village with nothing important and I only mention it in connection with the gardens. There are three exhibitions held here annually, to which all the world of fashion flock, because it is fashionable, there being nothing very remarkable to see in itself.[55]

Quite apart from its isolation and what the *Gardener's Magazine* considered to be the Society's restrictive policy on access, and the questionable methods of acquiring and distributing its plants, the number and location of the independent nurseries meant that their everyday activities were in any case bound to be familiar to a wider public than those of the Society at Chiswick.[56] Commercial showrooms were also likely to be more conveniently situated in areas which had an established commercial culture. New enterprises, and those forced to abandon central areas for economic or environmental reasons, moved into suburbs with a ready market for garden consumables. Initially, in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century city, nurseries formed part of the urban and suburban experience orientated around the royal palaces, and the playhouse and pleasure districts: Covent Garden, Knightsbridge, Pimlico, Chelsea, and Fulham all had thriving nursery cultures. Shortly before the beginning of our period, these were joined by nurseries in fashionable modern suburbs of Belgravia, Fitzrovia and Tyburnia. After the 1850s, due to overcrowding, pollution, and high rents, many nurseries migrated outwards to mixed districts like Holloway and Kentish Town, often maintaining offices on fashionable streets

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[54] *Ibid.*

[55] T. Reed Ferguson (ed.), *The 1836 London Diary of James Stratton Carpenter MD*, (Minerva Press, 1996), pp. 16-17.

[56] In 1825, the number of visitors to the LHS gardens was 4,706. This had increased to 4,740 the following year, which small increase the *Gardener's Magazine* rated, sarcastically, as 'a satisfactory proof of the steadiness of horticultural feeling in the public.' *Gardener's Magazine*, 2, 1827, 442.

or arcades in the City and West End.[57] Others moved further out, especially those specialising in hardy, herbaceous and other outdoor plants, and in 1858 it was said that in 'the suburbs of London there are a number of small nurseries where a little of everything may be had at a moments notice,'[58] and, later, that 'nurseries abound in every suburb, from which numerous varieties of beautiful and interesting plants and flowers may be obtained for immediate use, and at a trifling cost.'[59]

Meanwhile the London Horticultural Society sold its house at 21 Regent's Street for the sum of £2,960, erased the ornamental gardens near Turnham Green, Chiswick (dispersing its plants among its Fellows and the trade) because it was finally made aware that 'gardeners and the general public have access to gardens as well kept'.[60] At just the moment when most of the trade were evacuating the Capital's centre for the space and financial opportunities of the suburbs, the Society moved its ornamental gardens inwards to South Kensington onto land leased from the Commissioners of the Exhibition of 1851. John Lindley, Secretary to the Society, described plans to a meeting convened at the Adelphi in 1859. The new gardens were to comprise 'a winter-garden, Italian arcades, promenades and various features of attractive kinds, with facilities for annual flower-shows, and for a limited course of horticultural experiments.' Following 'the anniversary meeting of the Horticultural Society at the Lecture Theatre of the Museum of Science and Art, Kensington Gore,' it agreed not only to the construction of 'the Conservatory or Winter Garden of considerable extent' but 'also to provide facilities for *the admission of the public at a low price*.' 'Fashion and wealth' were to have 'their days of seclusion' while

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[57]The exceptions were the exotic nurseries whose extensive collections of glass houses rendered the tender, tropical plants they contained safe from London smoke. A large proportion of these exotic nurseries stayed on their Chelsea and Fulham sites, which were in any case never very populous areas, well into late century. Some, like Veitch's Royal Exotic Nursery, established about 1800 on the King's Road, Chelsea, lasted until the First World War.

[58]*Floral World*, 1 (12), 1858, 51.

[59]*Floral World*, 6 (new series), (8), 1871, 229.

[60]This Chiswick site, which belonged to the Duke of Devonshire (who, as former President of the Society had first met Joseph Paxton here in the 1820s, and requisitioned him for Chatsworth), now functioned solely as trial or 'experimental grounds' and closed in the early 1900s.

Mondays and late Saturdays were the opening days suggested 'for the millions'.[61] Nevertheless, even as the 'scientific' institutions were catching up with the trade in terms of design and accessibility in their public display gardens, commercial horticultural emporia continued to exploit their associations with the leisurely consumption of goods and information in the conservatory environment in such a way as to attract the largest audiences possible.

Crystal Palaces, 'museums of fashion in plate-glass cases' and the influence of the nursery environment.

Very soon, other retail outlets would incorporate elements which were technically necessary only for horticultural structures, in order to better display their brand of luxury goods. Shops were clearly also capitalising upon the exotic associations of the hothouse and certain forms of theatrical spectacle. In 1836, for example, James Stratton Carpenter recorded in his diary how he and his English cousin 'went to the Colliseum together'. The Colosseum, a rotunda at the south-west corner of Regent's Park, was designed for a panorama by Decimus Burton in 1824-27.[62] This polygonal hall - 126 foot across - was lit by a glazed dome from which the panorama of London, taking in St. Paul's, could be observed. The Colosseum was, he said, 'a vast building containing a theatre, Hall of Mirrors - a large circular room devoted to the fine arts, a conservatory - Alpine scenery, surfs [sic] cottages, grotto & caves etc.' They saw, among many things, 'wonderful performances of Bedouin Arabs' and a very curious 'Zoological concert' under an Arabesque ceiling.[63] Following its rebuilding in 1834, another fantastic environment, the Pantheon in Oxford Street, was transformed into a magnificent bazaar. The two-storied

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[61] *Floral World*, 3 (6), 1860, 114-116.

[62] Ironically, Burton began by designing houses at Regent's Park, moved on to the public buildings, and moved on to conservatories later. Burton was supervising architect of the Duke of Devonshire's conservatories at Chatsworth (1836-41) and the Royal Botanic Society, Regent's Park (1845-46). With the Dublin engineer Richard Turner he designed the Palm House (1844-48), Museum of Economic Botany (1856), and Temperate House (1859-62) at Kew Gardens.

[63] Ferguson (ed.), *The 1836 London Diary of James Stratton Carpenter MD*, 1996, pp. 47-48.

open-plan structure was galleried and had a curved, top-lit roof incorporating many windows. The Pantheon, founded in the 1770s, was in fact designed as a 'Winter Ranelagh' after the Chelsea pleasure gardens of that name.[64] Visiting in 1859, an observer noted a 'gust of flower-breeze,' from under the 'conservatory's crystal precincts;' 'there was a smaller conservatory for the sale of plants alongside the usual array of fancy goods. Of 'the magnificent linen-drapery establishments of Oxford Street,' meanwhile, he noted that with their 'vast shop fronts' they resembled 'museums of fashion in plate-glass cases'.[65] Other pleasure gardens saw the commercial sense in staging flower-shows, having a suitably large site already associated with gardens and entertainment. Cremorne Gardens, also in Chelsea, were reopened in the 1840s as pleasure grounds. Over about twelve acres were spread a banqueting hall, a theatre, an American bowling-saloon, an orchestra, grottoes, and lavender bowers which accommodated some 1,500 people. In keeping with its American theme, an annual American Exhibition was mounted in the Ashburnham Grounds at Cremorne Gardens. In July 1856 *Gossip for the Garden* advised that this exhibition was 'one of the finest sights London can at present afford. Messrs. Waterer and Godfrey who supply the exhibition, well illustrate what can be effected by capital when fairly directed by energy and talent.'[66] Two years later, the *Floral World* reviewed the attraction:

> For London folks, the exhibition of American plants, by Messrs. Waterer and Godfrey, which will be continued during the whole of June, in the Ashburnham Pavilion, at Cremorne Gardens, will be the most attractive floral event of the present month.[67]

Although it was frustrated that a new name had still not been found to describe 'American' plants the magazine agreed that the exhibition would appeal to 'country friends' as well as to those in the 'metropolis'. Cremorne Gardens were closed within twenty years, having acquired a bad reputation as a hot-bed of criminal and illicit activity. It is doubtful that the

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[64]Weinreb and Hibbert, *London Encyclopaedia*, 1983, p. 597.

[65]Alison Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping, 1880-1914*, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964), pp. 22-23.

[66]*Gossip for the Garden*, 1 (July), 1856, 159.

[67]*Floral World*, 1 (6), 1858, 124-125.

Exhibition of American plants in the Pavilion, like Cremorne itself, lasted much beyond the 1860s, unless the minister of Chelsea Baptist Chapel meant, in distributing a pamphlet condemning Cremorne as a 'nursery for every kind of vice',[68] to prove himself a wit.

Great and International Exhibition sites were the next to receive the nursery showroom treatment, this time via the direct influence of 'the patron of gardeners', Joseph Paxton and his Crystal Palace of 1851. According to a fanfare address in *Gossip for the Garden* in summer 1857, after the Palace's removal to Sydenham,

> we owe to his genius the most wonderful structure of modern times
> and that adapted - par excellence - for those displays of floral art
> which have come to be almost matters of necessity in these days.
> Well, then, may Sir Joseph Paxton say he is proud of
> Floriculture![69]

It is probably not coincidental that at the Horticultural Society of London's Summer Show in 1858, 'the grand feature of the show [...] was a Conservatory contributed by Messrs. Veitch, but not for competition.'[70] Veitch of Chelsea, London's most successful mid-century nurserymen and seedsmen, clearly saw the advertising potential of juxtaposing their own magnificent plant house with the Society's rather dull horticultural display. Following the success of the Crystal Palace, all manner of conservatories were made available for popular consumption; Hibberd noted in 1855 that '[t]o the credit of the builders, most of the new houses recently erected in the suburbs of London have small conservatories attached at the back'.[71] It was not surprising therefore, that the first edition of the *Floral World* in 1858 went so far as to suggest that 'the new *locus* for [floral art] at Sydenham has told favourably for gardening interests in general'.[72] Eventually, these combined influences were brought indirectly to bear on the Society, especially, in 1862, after its elevation to Royal Horticultural Society with its ornamental gardens at South Kensington. Indeed, a visiting Belgian tourist made a direct link between the glazed

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[68]Weinreb and Hibbert, *London Encyclopaedia*, 1983, p. 214. Cremorne closed in the late 1870s.

[69]*Gossip for the Garden*, 2 (July), 1857, 247.

[70]*Floral World*, 1 (7), 1858, 148.

[71]Shirley Hibberd, *The Town Garden*, (Groombridge and Sons, 1855; 1859), p. 165; and *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 249.

[72]*Floral World*, 1 (1), 1856, 4.

temples to commerce and industry and the improved displays made by organisations devoted to horticulture. 'We have recently visited two great exhibitions of flowers which have taken place in London,' he recorded in December 1862:

> the one held by the Royal Horticultural Society of London, the other by the Royal Botanic Society [Regent's Park]. Both have borrowed an exceptional character of magnificence from the neighbourhood of the Great Exhibition of Industry and Fine Arts.[73]

This Exhibition, the 1862 International at South Kensington, to which the RHS gardens were formally attached, was not designed by Paxton (who hated its partially glazed shed-like structure and the bulbous glass domes at each end). Nevertheless, the pattern was set, and the public looked to exhibitions in general to satisfy their need for novelty, spectacle and phantasy, all of which qualities were magnified by the medium of glass. In turn, Paxton's Crystal Palace, and his friend and colleague Isambard Kingdom Brunel's train stations, would inform the layout of new museums, winter gardens, and other exhibition structures; Brunel was himself responsible for the magnificent feats of hydraulic engineering, the fountains in the Crystal Palace Park at Sydenham. Department stores, like their predecessors the bazaars next incorporated the space, light and exoticism of the nursery showroom into their even more sumptuous designs. By the late-nineteenth century the fashion for conservatories of all sorts, coupled with technological advances and tax reductions which impacted on materials, had rendered plate glass to be perhaps the single most important element in successful luxury retail display.

Women and the World of Plants.

A cursory glance at nurserymen's account books shows that 'ladies' were well-represented as consumers of gardening paraphernalia and purchased their goods in person or sent their gardeners to the shop with a list. Formerly of King's Road, Chelsea, the Colville Nursery moved outwards to the south-western suburb of Roehampton where rents were cheaper and the air less polluted. The Chelsea Nursery Ledger of 1810 shows that apart from 76 pounds paid to their freeholder, the Earl of Grosvenor, the company was

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[73]*Gossip for the Garden*, 7 (December), 1862, 394.

also liable for six other types of annual taxes and rates. There were benefits to be gained from their prestigious situation, however, and two months after the Earl had received his dues in June 1810, he and 'Mrs. Grosvenor' had purchased some 36 pounds' worth of nursery goods for their own private gardens.[74] At Roehampton, Colville's Nursery Ledger for 1834, shows not only the variety of hardware sold in addition to plants and items for their culture, but also the range of domestic goods such as sundials, flower baskets, ceramic pots and cut flowers; many nurseries had a separate cut-flower office, adjoining the main nursery. Like other nurseries, Colville's bought and sold to the trade, as well as the retail market, hence the ledgers show the wide difference in moneys paid at any one time. This meant that domestic consumers would have rubbed shoulders with variously-occupied members of the nursery and seed trades, gardeners purchasing goods for employers' gardens, as well as the nursery's own employees. Nurseries also functioned as labour exchanges, and many customers hired gardeners or labourers by the day when contracting their other business. In spite of their fantastic surroundings, then, private visitors' experience of the showrooms was not divorced from the worlds of exchange and labour supporting the London and suburban gardening industry; rather, they were likely to see how their own small purchases were part of the larger economy of the garden. The Order Books indicate that more women were hiring gardeners by the day than were men, but also that more men were known to the firm and so tended to pay on account rather than dealing in person with cash. The men's names listed often indicated business transacted with professional gardeners, frequently indicating the head of the household, regardless of who had placed the order. The business was diverse, however, and it is not easy to discern patterns of consumer behaviour purely on the basis of gender, the principal differences being, naturally enough, between professionals and amateurs. On April 15, 1834, for example, Mrs. Gilpen Painsfield of The Cottage, Sheen, bought herbaceous plants and flowering shrubs including roses, honeysuckles, ribes, paeony, saxifrages and periwinkles, and 'a man half a day'. 'Mr Dennis, Nurseryman, Kings Road Chelsea' took away 'bits and bobs' of unspecified value; Nurseryman Mr. Ronalds of Brentford had 150

[74]Minet Library, London, IV/39, 1, Colville Estate, (Chelsea Nursery Ledger: 1810).

box; and Mr. Elliott of Putney, 3 yuccas. An entry for 23 June 1834 records that a Miss James of Mortlake spent sixpence on nails and 3*s*. 6*d*. on a man for the day. Next day, Mr. Lewis of Barnes Terrace bought two shillings worth of cut flowers, while Mrs. Barton of Richmond bought a threepenny broom and a man for two days at seven shillings. Many ladies dropped in for nosegays. Most customers appear to have been known to the sales staff, though on occasion 'a stranger' (or more often 'a Lady') was entered in the order book to indicate an instance of passing trade. One such entry is revealed in the 1834 cashbook and records a visit by a party of three women and the purchases they made.

May 21 3 Ladies		
First lady		
1 lobelia		9
1 Elseholzia		9
4 Helianthemum		3
2 Heartsease		
2nd Lady		
2 dwf roses	3	
3rd Lady		
(Mrs Foot, Barnes)		
1 geranium	2	6

[75]

The two latter women would appear to have bought their plants on impulse, perhaps encouraged by the first lady's selection. All however, had visited the shop in person, either purposefully or attracted in by the window displays.

Altogether these spectacularly modern environments and their several associations with commerce, technology and leisure, combined to produce and arena for fashionable consumption enjoyed by men and women in equal measure. In the same way that the department store appealed to the tastes of the fashionable gentleman as well as the lady, so the horticultural showroom attracted both sexes of practical and armchair gardener. Here, women might absorb themselves in a little botany, while men could indulge in some impulse buying for the garden. Both the botanical nature of the items and the didactic manner of their display would help dissipate the accusations of

[75]Minet Library, London, IV/39, 7, Colville Estate, (Roehampton Nursery Order Book: 1834).

idleness and fripperous self-indulgence which were often levelled at the middle-class consumer of luxuries.

5.4. Lady - Gentlewoman - Every Woman: Cultivating the Female Amateur Gardener.

> Flower-gardening has progressed rapidly; and the amusement of floriculture has become the dominant passion of the ladies of Great Britain. It is a passion most blessed in its effects, considered as an amusement and a benefit. Nothing humanises and adorns the female mind more surely than a taste for ornamental gardening. It compels the reason to act, and the judgement to observe; it is favourable to meditation of the most serious kind; it exercises the fancy in harmless and elegant occupation, and braces the system by its healthful tendency.
> (Louisa Johnson, *Every Lady Her Own Flower Gardener*, 1839, p. 5.)

> All gardening is well within the capacity of a woman of average health and strength, and some of the best home Edens of England are those managed wholly by their Eves.
> (Mary Hampden, *Every Woman's Flower Garden*, 1915, p. 3.)

The increased presence of women, both as authors and subjects of horticultural literature after 1800, was significant, as was the new preference for titles which stressed flower-gardening or 'floriculture'. And, by the time Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* appeared in 1826, women made up a large number of the illustrators of botanical works, nurserymen's catalogues and gardening manuals. Women authors were also established in the field of botany and the natural sciences before this date, with the result that a number of best-selling volumes of 'educational' botany and natural history written by women had appeared by the late eighteenth century. Several of these authors next turned their hand to horticulture, specifically its floral branch. Maria Elizabeth Jacson's *A Florist's Manual: Hints for a Gay Flower-Garden* (1816), Elizabeth Kent's *Flora Domestica, or the Portable Flower Garden* (1823), and Louisa Johnson's *Every Lady Her Own Flower Gardener* (1839), were forerunners in this trend. Ann B. Shteir's study of botany and women, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science, Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860*, shows how the works of Jacson (1755-1829) and Kent (?-1861) intersected with both 'science culture and

literary culture.'[76] Although Elizabeth Kent, sister-in-law to the 'cockney poet' Leigh Hunt (a friend and gardening neighbour of Loudon), and a well-known figure within Romantic Hampstead circles, chose to publish *Flora Domestica* anonymously, she wrote and reviewed for Loudon's *Magazine of Natural History* in her own name. She also advertised private botany lessons in his *Gardener's Magazine* of 1828 which were conducted from her London home. Kent followed *Flora Domestica* with *Sylvan Sketches, or A Companion to the Park and Shrubbery* but *Flora Domestica* remained the more popular book. Despite their backgrounds, these female authors toned down their scientific language in the hope of attracting 'ordinary' audiences. Jane Loudon's *Practical Instructions in Gardening for Ladies* was published in 1840 and the *Ladies' Magazine of Gardening*, edited by Mrs. Loudon, appeared the following year. While these books were favourably reviewed by men, each of these publications, most of which went into several editions, appealed directly to women's superior understanding of domestic matters, into which category floriculture naturally belonged. When Louisa Johnson affirmed that 'flower-gardening has progressed rapidly; and the amusement of floriculture has become the dominant passion of the ladies of Great Britain', she assumed, like the other authors, women's active role in gardening, and was not in the main advising them on the management of household staff.[77]

Modern historians have noted how, with the ongoing professionalisation of formerly amateur activities science, especially botany, was increasingly defeminised.[78] Where women had always been excluded from academe, they now found their amateur involvement in these forms of knowledge dismissed as meddling which trivialised 'real' scientific enquiry. This was amply reflected in botanical literature of the period (probably because of the increasing numbers of women engaging with it), although publications directed toward the amateur horticulturist (as opposed to botanist) were of

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[76]Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science, Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 7.

[77]Louisa Johnson, *Every Lady Her Own Flower-Gardener*, (W. S. Orr & Co., 1839).

[78]Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 1996.

necessity more guarded, horticulture being too closely associated with all things domestic to be thought totally beyond the scope of women. Through gardening, then, women might continue with their scientific education, collecting, arranging and recording different species, being largely obscured from unsympathetic 'professional' eyes. Of course, some women continued to botanise publicly, others illustrated and wrote about the subject, though many did so anonymously. Loudon welcomed and encouraged the women who advertised private instruction in botany in his *Gardener's Magazine*.

If Hibberd appeared to suggest that too much knowledge was a dangerous thing when he hinted at the association of intricate horticultural operations with 'unwomanliness', he was probably encouraging them to see that technical gardening was not the sole province of the professional nurseryman, but an appropriate domestic occupation for respectable gentlefolk in general. He was also persuading them that serious gardening need not be seriously dull. Reviewing Mrs. Loudon's introduction of the gardening gauntlet in 1856, he reassured his readers that

> there can be no reason why ladies should not take to rose budding and other departments of rose culture, indeed, a rosary stocked with plants raised by one fair hand, would be a triumph, not of strong-mindedness and blue-stockingism, but of feminine patience and ingenuity, applied to a work of artistic taste and high ornament.[79]

If botany declined as a truly popular activity, then it was superseded or continued by horticulture which, although it retained an affiliation with science, was a more practical, physically engaging exercise. Although some of the botaniser's time was spent away from home in the fields, more often it was spent indoors with books. The wide-ranging nature of horticulture led to its appropriation for a similarly wide range of political ends. The garden was a prominent theme in Evangelising literature; conservative social theory advocated the garden as the panacea for those scourges of working-class life: drink and disorder. Cobbett recommended gardening for the middle classes, especially middle-class women, as an alternative to the corruptive power of modern conspicuous leisure:

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[79]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 489.

> How much better, during the long and dreary winter, for daughters, and even sons, to assist, or attend, their mothers in a green-house, than to be seated with her at cards, or in the blubberings over a stupid novel, or at any other amusement that can possible be conceived! How much more innocent, more pleasant, more free from the temptation to evil, this amusement than any other? [...] the taste is fixed at once and it remains to the exclusion of cards and dice to the end of life.

Further, gardening was 'a taste which is indulged at home: it tends to make home pleasant, and to endear us to the spot on which it is our lot to live.'[80]

Gardening may have made home pleasant but not all aspects of home gardening made for pleasant topics of discussion. Victorian attitudes to manure are not what we might expect, however. Leaf through almost any manual of practical gardening published in the nineteenth century, and one finds plenty to contradict the 'popular understanding [of] "Victorian" [which] has long served as a general synonym for oppressive domesticity and repressive prudery.'[81] Manure was not only necessary for the well-being of the garden, it was an essential part of everyday life. A Croydon correspondent writing to the *Floral World* in 1858, roundly praised the nourishing qualities of the bird manure, Cuero Guano. This horticultural product was not only nutritious, however, it was also available in refined and manageable form. The author recommended Cuero Guano

> for use among all amateur florists, especially in the greenhouse and conservatory, where nothing unclean or offensive may intrude; indeed, such is its nature in these respects, that a lady may keep a bottle of it in her chiffonier or work-table drawer, and apply it to her floral pets, at her drawing room window, without soiling her fingers or offending her sense of smell.[82]

Jane Loudon's *Practical Instruction in Gardening for Ladies* was rather more straightforward. First published in 1841, the book sold 1,350 copies on the first day of issue and continued to sell in prodigious quantities. A fourth edition appeared in 1843 to which the lately-widowed Mrs. Loudon added a preface stating that

> as the rapid sale of the previous editions of this work affords the surest proof that it has met the wants of those for whose use it was

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[80]William Cobbett, *The English Gardener*, (1829; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 40.

[81]Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36, 1993, (383-413), 386.

[82]*Floral World*, 1 (5), 1858, 104.

> designed [...] I have now made [...] many alterations and additions [...] I have done so in order that my book may keep pace with the improving spirit of the times.[83]

She dedicated the revised work to her husband. The bulk of these alterations and additions were directed to the various qualities of available effluent: 'I have rewritten the chapter on manures, in order to give my readers an idea of the new theories of Liebig on the subject.'[84] Her chapter had none of the reticence about dealing with matter 'unclean and offensive' exhibited by the *Floral World.* Mrs. Loudon wrote comprehensively and plainly on the chemical and cultural characteristics of fermented horse and cow dung, pigeon droppings and more exotic guano; and of bone dust, night-soil compounds - prepared in Paris or imported from China - and of the benefits of ready-putrefied, liquid manure from the drainings of dunghouses.[85] Clearly hers was a sensible approach to a fundamental aspect of horticulture. However, rather than see Jane Loudon's pragmatism as unusual, and the more delicate approach made by the later writer as the respectable norm, it is worth considering the spaces where their respective manuring took place: Loudon was concerned with the garden proper, those parts set apart from the house. She would no more have mentioned liquid cow dung or nightsoil in the same breath as conservatory culture, as would the reader who recommended 'poudrette'. For practical reasons rather than fears of offending more polite sensibilities, effluent was separated from those areas of the home devoted to regular social intercourse, outside the house as well as within it. Such separation was governed in large part by concerns for health which, although founded in the popular misapprehension that disease was conveyed by odour rather than bacteria, was ultimately effective in rendering household waste at once useful, inoffensive, and safe.

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[83]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 6 (new series), 1840, 350-351, 'Review' of Mrs. Loudon's *Instruction in Gardening for Ladies.* Given that this review predated publication by some twelve months, the sales figures must refer to orders placed in advance of *Practical Instruction*'s publication. Private subscription was still a common method of raising funds for publications in the first half of the nineteenth century.

[84]Jane Loudon, *Practical Instructions in Gardening for Ladies*, (John Murray, 1841; 1843 edn.), p. ix.

[85]Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies*, 1843, pp. 32-38.

Small wonder, then, that *Practical Instructions in Gardening for Ladies* and gardening books in general considered the intricacies of manuring as of general interest: its processing formed part of the domestic engine. After all, any residual Victorian sensitivity to bodily excretions resulted not so much from a vague notion of their impropriety but rather their very proximity to everyday life. Even in households employing several servants, middle-class women had regular contact with such excretions via their own bodies, and those of their dependants. Indeed, the messy stages of life were a great deal more familiar in the necessarily fastidious Victorian interior than is conceivable today.[86]

Mary Hampden's *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener* (1915), owed its title to a book of 1767, *Every Man His Own Gardener* by the Kew gardener, John Abercrombie. Mary Hamden presumably wanted to borrow from the success of *Every Man* as well as the title she feminised; its popularity had enabled Abercrombie to buy his own nursery in Hackney.[87] *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener*, however, was also a thinly disguised reworking of *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening* (1892), but with some significant modifications; neither work was acknowledged by Hampden. The structures of both books were very similar, as was much of the technical information; but Hampden's ideological approach was markedly different, and began with the book's modernised title: 'The Gentlewoman' has become 'Every Woman'. Although this shift in emphasis is important in terms of gender construction in the period between 1892 and 1915, the major difference is in the 1915 book's treatment of social class as regards both men and women in the garden. At first glance, Hampden's use of another's form and content seems lazy, if not plagiaristic. But her unacknowledged choice of model provided her with an ideal arena in which to explore social change in the preceding twenty-three years in the apparently anodyne literary

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[86]If we believe that polite address relied overly upon euphemism and delicate phrasing to describe the 'impolite' necessities of daily life in the nineteenth century we had better cast a thought to the equally evasive linguistic conventions which continue to be employed in explaining such necessities today.

[87]Richard Bisgrove, *The National Trust Book of the English Garden*, (1990; Penguin Books, 1992), p. 145.

context of the gardening book. It also allowed her to comment upon, and criticise, past and present preconceptions about social class and garden type. Of course, her comments can be read as signifying change beyond the garden, but she can speak all the more effectively by apparently confining herself to the non-confrontational realm of the garden through the medium of the domestic handbook. Even so, like many authors of home and garden guides in the early twentieth century, she was at pains to stress that women know that 'garden forming is a distinct charity'.[88] Because more and more women were undertaking 'men's work' after 1914, because of the war, it was understandable that they did not wish to have their leisure activities similarly defined. Hence, although 'woman's province is daily expanding further [...] who will deny that it begins at home?' or that gardening gives 'a lovely frame to domesticity'?[89] Stressing the domestic and feminine nature of gardening removed it from the association with paid work in which the women merely 'replaced' the men. In so doing, they created what the novice gardener and writer, Elizabeth Von Arnim called in 1898, 'a garden all my own'.[90]

5.5. Feminising the Suburban Environment.

Although suburban living as an ideal became increasingly respectable during the Victorian period, there were particular suburbs which continued to be associated with less reputable stereotypically feminine proclivities; the shady seclusion of St. John's Wood, as we have seen, was well known to harbour up-market prostitutes, kept women, and their illegitimate offspring. Novelists made much of the schism between the architectural and horticultural conformity of the exterior and the interior which was penetrable only by the worst sorts of imagination. It is notable that Wilkie Collins not only located his criminals, 'kept women and courtesans' in this area. He also, in *The*

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[88]Mary Hampden, *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener*, (Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1915), p. 1.

[89]Hampden, *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener*, 1915, pp. 6-7.

[90]Anon (Elizabeth Von Arnim), *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, (MacMillan, 1898), p. 21.

Woman in White (1860), established a women's asylum for hysterics and others suffering from supposedly female maladies of the mind.[91]

There were some unexpected apologists for suburban domesticity. Although Leonard Woolf (1880-1969) decried the 'spiritual suburbanism which was the warp upon which so many superior novelists wove their stories between 1890 and 1914' he remembered with the same intellectual detachment the 'high psychological and aesthetic values' which were present, at least, in his family of middle-class assimilated Jews. But on recalling the death of his father in 1892, and the subsequent relocation of the matriarchal family to Barnes, Woolf was more wistful. His ambivalence is worth recording in full.

> I think that there was something to be said for the kind of life lived by the Victorian Woolf family in Lexham Gardens and by the many other similar bourgeois families in Bayswater and Kensington. It is of course condemned by Karl Marx and his all-red disciples, and it is because I condemn its economic basis and its economic effect upon other classes that I have been a socialist for most of my life. But the social standards of value in Lexham Gardens were very high, much higher than in any proletarian society today or in the proletarian section of a mixed class society.[92]

In *The Design of Suburbia*, A. M. Edwards wondered that the 'influence of female emancipation on architectural taste has never been studied but it must,' he wrote in 1980, 'have been considerable.' If Edwards is uncharacteristically hesitant on this matter, he had no doubts that suburbia's 'ugliness' was the result of women's emancipation. This is a strange remark from an architect and architectural historian, as we have already identified that neither the suburban environment nor its detractors were new phenomena and certainly not born from the period after 1928. Perhaps Edwards identified 1930s suburban development as the most appalling culmination of this architectural taste. Whatever his periodisation, however, Edwards has come to the same conclusion of William Cobbett 160 years earlier, that 'the rise in the status of women' was responsible for the ugliness of suburban development, which was '[s]o

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[91]Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1998), p. 362.

[92]Leonard Woolf, *Sowing, an Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904*, (Hogarth Press, 1962), p. 24.

hideous in its appearance and so alarming in its spread.' In support of this imaginative thesis he turned to a 1930s architectural critic:

> woman's taste is by nature far more individualistic than man's [...] she has a sense of property and a desire to display it [...] she is at once more conservative and more open to the appeal of novelty: aesthetically she has none of the makings of a citizen.[93]

Following the tradition of much anti-suburban rhetoric, twentieth-century historians and cultural commentators have too often allowed their own antipathy to suburban material culture, including its feminised strain, to colour their readings thereof. The anthropologist Yi-Fu Tuan, for example, sums up the Victorian house and garden, with reference to the fictional Mr. Wemmick's Walworth garden in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860-61), as 'a curiously cloistered world of women and small children throughout the day'. This image, he says, 'was beginning to emerge in the eighteenth century, [and] came into sharper focus later, in the midst of the socio-economic transformations and moral hypocrisies of the Victorian age.'[94] Tuan thus resorts to well-worn stereotypes of the 'hypocrisies' of the 'Victorian age'. He even repeats the old adage about Victorian woman's place in the 'doll's house', and misrepresented Dickens to boot, whose portrayal of Wemmick's suburban home was a rare celebration of masculine domesticity. Tuan was apparently also unable to see that Dickens was himself gently satirising the state of contemporary suburban domesticity and the plethora of manuals which sought valiantly to improve it. Unlike Tuan, Michael Waters sees that Dickens intended Wemmick's garden to be a refuge, not a prison. 'This kind of suburban idyll, the locus of familial sentiments and emotional

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[93]A. M. Edwards, *The Design of Suburbia: a Critical Study in Environmental History*, (Pembridge Press Ltd., 1981), pp.130-134. Edwards dedicated this book to his wife.

[94]Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection, The Making of Pets*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 128. It is at Mr. and Mrs. Pocket's chaotic suburban home and garden in Hammersmith where, unsupervised by drunk and gossiping female servants, were children 'who were not growing up or being brought up, but were tumbling up'. Dickens' point is not that the house is full of women, still less that the domestic sphere is their prison, rather that the parents are lacking in the very domestic skills which Mr. Pocket teaches, and which every respectable middle-class suburbian was supposed to possess. See Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (Wordsworth Classics, 1992), p. 144.

expressiveness, more clearly indicates Dickens's critical attitude towards the materialistic and de-personalizing conditions of the city'[95] than it did his attitude to the suburban environment itself. Even the American city planner Lewis Mumford recognized that '[m]any Londoners are willing to put up with endless discomfort and tedious travel in order to provide individual houses for their families'. What Mumford perceived to be the 'saving life-sense of the cockney'[96] he saw epitomised in the 'essential humanness' of the Walworth 'Castle', its garden, and its inhabitants: Mr. Wemmick and his father, the 'Aged'.

> Humanly speaking, Mr. Wemmick's villa with its moat and drawbridge is not as ridiculous in terms of domestic needs as a ten storey apartment house. The Old Un's crotchets are essentially closer to man's abiding impulses than the modern rationalizer's calculations.[97]

Historians sympathetic to the position of women in the domestic environment, on the other hand, persist in portraying the home as a decorated hen-coop. Although such histories are often self-avowedly concerned with Evangelical and other prescriptive literature about women's place within the 'domestic sphere', their reluctance to discuss other, complementary and contradictory, texts only re-enforces the idea that the Victorian home was managed on a 'divide and rule' basis. Even accounts which incorporate the more domestic parts of the garden have, by their focus on the received wisdom of prescriptive literature, tended to distort the historical record of the home and present it as artificially separated. A recent paper on *Nineteenth-Century Essays on the "Masculine" and "Feminine" Room*, for example, seems to accept the essays of the title as accurate representations of the natural ties between women and home, and so perpetuates the sorts of hundred-year-old prescriptive domestic ideology preached by contemporary moralising evangelists with literary pretensions. The misleading statement that the 'axis between femininity and Nature was symbolised in the drawing room and boudoir through the inclusion of flowers, plantlife (*jardinieres*, fern cases, aquaria) and still life or landscape

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[95]Michael Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature*, (Aldershot, Hants: Scholar, 1988), pp. 212-3.

[96]Lewis Mumford, 'The Plan of London' in *City Development*, (Secker & Warburg, 1946), p. 187.

[97]Mumford, *City Development*, 1946, p. 186.

pictures,' is preceded by the usual gender stereotyping of the Victorian woman as prisoner in her own home: 'the potted plant became the perfect image of domesticated womanhood in the nineteenth century - bound but beautiful, diminutive, decorative and too delicate for the outside world.'[98] It is true that garden writing did make comparisons between women and particular sorts of plants and gardening. But it also recommended that the full range of domestic gardening activities were within the province of women's facility. So when the *Floral World* printed a passage in 1864 eulogising the virtues of a Central American evergreen stove plant as a favourite of 'lady cultivators' for the conservatory, this represented more of an enjoyment in feminine floral language than an attempt to press home a coded domestic ideology intent on confining women to their 'natural sphere'.

> If there are qualities in some plants which give them precedence in the favour of lady cultivators, Centradenia rosea may be pronounced as decidedly a lady's plant, and one of the most desirable objects to place on a pedestal, or in a conspicuous place apart from the general collection of plants on stages, as its distinctiveness of colouring and graceful outlines are seen to the fullest advantage only when it is so isolated and placed [...] on a level with the eye.[99]

Not all sorts of gardening were so easily eulogised. Especially, perhaps, the cultivation of plants in confined environments such as the *jardinieres*, Wardian cases, and aquaria fashionable in the period. Further, if such vessels were destined for the boudoir or drawing-room, it was probably because they were delicate, rather than decorative or beautiful, glass being much weaker than it is today. Placing a *jardiniere* - a cast-iron stand supporting steeply racked stages for potted plants - or an equally stable plate-glass tank full of water in the most frequently occupied rooms was, simply, good household management. Such interesting objects would, especially if supporting peculiar-looking plant and animal life, have proved particularly attractive to children (fig. 5.20). In any case, 'plantlife' was as likely to be found in the open hall as the drawing-room, where it could be more easily surveilled. Mr. and Mrs. Linley Sambourne kept their aquarium in a specially adapted staircase window in their villa at Kensington; the childless Shirley

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[98]Juliet Kinchin, 'Interiors: Nineteenth-Century Essays on the "Masculine" and the "Feminine" Room,' in Pat Kirkham, (ed.), *The Gendered Object*, (Manchester: MUP, 1996), p. 22.

[99]*Floral World*, 7 (6), 1864, 115.

Hibberd kept similar vessels in his study window.[100] Aquaria and other tanks containing animal life were not necessarily considered either beautiful or aesthetically delicate. They were decorative, but they were also expected to interest and instruct, qualities which need have nothing to do with conventional notions of beauty and delicacy. Wilkie Collins' description of 'the art of keeping fish and reptiles as domestic pets' in a glass tank given in his novel *No Name* (1862-63) had more in common with Macbeth than Victorian ladies' domestic accomplishment manuals. The tank, which sat in the back window of a lodging-house in Vauxhall Walk, Lambeth, was received by a female visitor with 'irrepressible astonishment and disgust'. It was

> ornamented in the middle by a miniature pyramid of rock-work interlaced with weeds. Snails clung to the sides of the tank; tadpoles and tiny fish swam swiftly in the green water; slippery efts [newts] and slimy frogs twined their noiseless way in and out of the weedy rock-work - and, on top of the pyramid, there sat solitary, cold as the stone, brown as the stone, motionless as the stone, a little bright-eyed toad.[101]

Shirley Hibberd thought the Aquarium at once novel, scientific, charming and elegant. His suggested Fresh-Water Aquarium did not contain small, delicate fish but great brutes like Gudgeon, Prussian Carp, Loach, and Bream. Their recommended feeding matter was equally prosaic: spiders and flies. Aquaria and ferneries 'may sport in gay drawing-rooms,' he acknowledged, but such rustic adornments were not to be restricted to a particular room in homes of taste. They were equally appropriate in 'homely parlours, in the study of the recluse, or the chamber of the valetudinarian'.[102] Hibberd tells us that the 'first Marine Vivarium established in London, was constructed by Mrs. Thynne, who made the experiment of bringing some live madrepores from Torquay to London, for the purpose of study and the entertainment of friends; this was in the autumn of 1846.' The following year she added 'many zoophytes and other animals'. This woman was certainly not bound, nor too sensitive, for the outside world.[103]

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[100]Shirley Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, 1857, p. 148.

[101]Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, 1862-1863, (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1998), p. 274. The novel is set in 1847.

[102]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 10.

[103]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

Hibberd regarded the gradual colonisation of his space by his wife's fern collection with pleasure and amusement: 'my little corner greenhouse has been given up to them, and in the place of shelves and collections of fuchsias [...] there is now a bank of ferns [...] and I can see them creeping along the line of the privet fence to take possession of the houses at the lower end of the garden.' Despite her practical abilities, however, Hibberd failed to persuade his wife to commit her knowledge to print.

> I am compelled to this course by the diffidence of my chief friend in the fern department, who, being of retiring disposition, and above all things dreading to be mentioned publicly (*ala* "not used to public speaking") as a person of talent in this line, insists that I shall keep her name and fame a profound secret and take to myself, as of my own obtaining, whatever results she may attain to in this most refined and most delightful of all known hobbies. My wi-- I should say, my friend, companion, sometimes advisor, and occasionally monitor and corrector in fern culture, outstrips me in patience and every other needful quality in this pursuit.[104]

But she was sufficiently well-known for another writer to refer to her by name in the previous month's issue of the *Floral World.* The Alpine enthusiast [Mrs.] T. W. W[ebb] noted that 'Mrs Hibberd says the cocoa-nut refuse is the best material she ever had for growing ferns in glass cases.'[105] Her husband also favoured fern culture over other sorts of gardening in spite of his impatience, being so enamoured with his 'sanctum santorium' and its contents that he felt the need 'to work out the biography of each individual plant which finds a foster father in me.'[106] He rounded off this essay on his 'little fernery' by 'strongly advis[ing] any one who heartily loves ferns *not* to go to Kew, [for] he is likely to be tempted to break the tenth commandment.'[107]

Hibberd did not always use the generic 'his' when writing for non-professional gardeners. In an 1865 article on plant collecting, for instance, he suggested that 'the best course for an amateur is to make collections in a systematic way, and according to the circumstances that governs *his or her* range of operations.'[108] This distinction may seem

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[104]*Floral World,* 7 (7), 1864, 144.

[105]*Floral World*, 7 (2), 1864, 18.

[106]*Floral World*, 7 (8), 1864, 199.

[107]*Ibid.*, 200.

[108]*Floral World*, 8 (10), 1865, 220, emphases mine.

of minor consequence but it represented a significant break with standard grammatical practice of the day.

5.6. The Public House and the Private Garden.

If we have established that conceiving the nineteenth century purely in terms of the 'public', the 'private', and the 'separate', is at the very least problematic, how then do we go about reconceiving the historical geography of the domestic environment without falling prey to the received wisdom of conventional domestic ideology? In mentioning the various gardening activities of women incidentally throughout the thesis, I have tried to impress upon the reader that women's involvement at all levels with the worlds of gardening was unexceptional. Middle-class women's gardening activity, that is, was no different from middle-class men's. Rank mattered more than sex.[109] However, in order to better illustrate women, children and men's relationships with their gardens, and their experience of the home landscape in general, the final section of Chapter Five focuses explicitly on members of the family and their gardens. The family 'provided a kind of prism through which individuals were taught to view the world and their own roles within it'; it 'was an agent - an active and not a passive force',[110] and 'should be viewed as an independent variable alongside class, education, religion and gender'.[111] Rather than follow the domestic lives of one family or kinship network, examples have been taken from across the middle class, broadly conceived, to show that the home and garden might be at once a place of adventure, fun, learning, studious leisure, and, indeed, of refuge (figs. 5.21-5.23 and 5.24-5.25). These 'functions' of the ordinary garden were not polar opposites, nor mutually exclusive. Nor were they experiences necessarily defined by gender (fig. 5.32).

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[109]M. Jeanne Peterson, *Family Love, and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. x.

[110]Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships 1500-1900*, (MacMillan Press, 1994), pp. 273, 274.

[111]*Ibid.*, p. xix.

Women's diaries and autobiographies of this time and place reveal that much of their supposed concealment within the domestic sphere was in fact a self-imposed withdrawal: it seems that many women found the constant round of formal calls made to their 'private' homes, by 'the usual female visitors', the 'lugubrious kinsfolk' and 'the very few ["semi-detached" neighbours] who became known to us through the vicar, the schoolmaster and the doctor', tiresome, at the very least.[112] In addition to the grocer's boy, the coalman, the tool-grinder and the jobbing gardener, to name but a few of the tradesmen who supplied the suburban household, the round of social visits must have rendered the average suburban home anything but private: households were particularly warned about the horticultural (and sexual) dangers of itinerant plant-sellers or 'Botany Bens' (fig. 5.26). The supposed peace and quiet of the suburb was thus a relative quality: entertainments as well as services brightened the suburban environment. Molly Hughes and her brothers collected 'pennies for the Guy' on November 5th and went carolling at Christmas in their Canonbury suburb. Life in Clapham at the turn of the century seems, if Thomas Burke's memory served him right, to have been carried out to the strains of a permanent barrel organ. And, 'Saturday Morning brought always to our gay-gardened little street a procession of picturesque vagabonds selling things.'[113] Even the houses scattered in a geographically remote suburb would thus be caught in a network of services, deliveries, and visits which, with the letter post (much more frequent than today), bound the suburb's business and its communications tightly to both local and metropolitan concerns (fig. 5.27).

Instead of resenting her father and brothers' Bank Holiday excursions during the 1870s and '80s, Molly Hughes remembered how 'Mother and I stayed at home to enjoy what she called "the freedom of the wild ass", with no lessons, no proper meals, no duty walks, and above all no chance of callers.'[114] Some, men included, refused to participate in the supposedly obligatory ritual of calling, while others made themselves

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[112]M. Vivian Hughes, *A London Family 1870-1900*, (Geoffrey Cumberledge with Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 79, 83, 77.

[113]Thomas Burke, *Son of London*, (Herbert Jenkins, 1948), p. 26.

[114]Hughes, *London Family*, 1946, p. 22.

scarce when the door-bell was rung.[115] Not all visitations were avoidable however, as Hughes made clear. 'To give a tea-party was bad enough, but to go to one was worse. The usual week's notice, preclude[d] all chance of evasion.'[116] Mrs. Hughes kept her drawing-room clock set fast in order to make even these social invasions more tolerable.[117] Emily Hall's diaries reveal how, unlike her sister, she disliked 'those tiresome creatures, visitors, whose inroads molest us now at all hours of the day from breakfast till bed-time.'[118] Allowed an extraordinary amount of personal freedom to roam about London, mix in all sorts of social situations (where they told risqué jokes, flirted inappropriately, and undertook deliberately to become drunk), the sisters perhaps naturally complained of the lack of privacy afforded by the very place where they expected to find it: their home. Other caller-shy residents hid in their gardens. Thomas Burke noticed how an aunt of his best friend Freda voluntarily concealed herself there in late-Victorian Clapham. Her 'house was a late Georgian house, or perhaps cottage *ornee* of that period, with a large garden all round it - flower-garden, kitchen-garden, orchard, shrubbery, rosery, and a huge front lawn guarded by a cedar'. Into this garden she withdrew after the precautionary displaying of a Not-at-Home card by the gate. A professional singer, Aunt required privacy at home: '"Well, she *was* out",' her niece protested, '"Out in the garden. She doesn't like seeing people Sunday afternoons."'[119] These were not the houses and gardens of imprisoned or overprotected women. Rather, they offered respite from exhausting public activities - in much the same way that the Victorian home provided men with a peaceful complement to their place of paid work. As the much read *Elizabeth and her German Garden* quoted in 1898 'Two paradises 'twere in one to live in Paradise alone':

> The garden is the place I go to for refuge and shelter, not the house. In the house are duties and annoyances, servants to exhort and admonish, furniture, and meals; but out there blessings crowd round

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[115]Molly's brother hid in his study when he heard the door-bell.

[116]Hughes, *London Family*, 1946, p. 112.

[117]*Ibid.*, p. 61.

[118]O. A. Sherrard, (ed.), *Two Victorian Girls*, (Frederick Muller Ltd., 1966), p. 6.

[119]Burke, *Son of London*, 1948, p. 76.

> me at every step - it is there that I am sorry for the unkindness in me, for those selfish thoughts that are so much worse than they feel, it is there that all my sins and silliness are forgiven, there that I feel protected and at home, and every flower and weed is a friend and every tree a lover.[120]

Those women who made do, like George's aunt in *Tono-Bungay* (1909), with 'what is called the dining-room of a small house' with 'two rooms, bedroom behind and living-room in front', 'dreamt hopelessly of a garden' such as Elizabeth had: '"I shall be glad of the garden," she said. "Its going to be a big one with rosaries and things. Fountains in it. Pampas Grass. Hothouses."'[121] In unwitting recognition of the freedom it offered, H. G. Wells identified women's desire for a garden as yet another example of their grasping, their 'limitless expenditure'. George, yielding to his fiance's request for a garden, resigned himself to affording one:

> "If" I said, "We could have a double-fronted detached house - at Ealing say - with a square patch of lawn in front and a garden behind" [...] She had raised her price two hundred pounds a year and [...] I had bought her at last. "Do you know Pampas Grass?" said Marion. "I love Pampass Grass ... if there is room". "You shall have Pampas Grass," I declared.[122]

Wells's lover, the 'Elizabeth' of the German garden, would surely not have agreed with his view of her need for a garden of one's own.

Just after the outbreak of the First World War the author George Moore reflected on what he saw as the domestic inertia induced by a century of internal peace. He saw in this inertia, epitomised by the villa, not so much a prison for women, in whom he had little interest beyond the biological, but a prison created by women for men. With all the conviction of a man who had not experienced war at first hand Moore lamented that

> We want tumult and war to give us forgetfulness, sublime moments of peace to enjoy a kiss in; but we are expected to be home to dinner at seven, and to say nothing that might shock the neighbours. Respectability has wound itself about society, a sort of octopus, and nowhere are you quite free from one of its horrible suckers. The power of the villa residence is supreme: art, science, politics, religion it has transformed to suit its requirements. The villa goes to

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[120]Anon., (Elizabeth von Arnim), *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*, (Macmillan, 1898), p. 28.

[121]H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay*, (1909; Collins, 1962), p. 90.

[122]Wells, *Tono-Bungay*, (1909), pp. 155-156.

> the Academy, the villa goes to the theatre, and therefore the art of today is mildly realistic; not the great realism of idea, but the puny reality of materialism [...] the meanness [...] the degrading naturalism of a coloured photograph.[123]

To Moore, life inside the Victorian villa was both stifled by respectability and yet described as being almost universally influential; men's individual creativity was sucked dry by 'sharks below and cruel-birds above' in the villa and yet that villa's minute and local influence was held to be simultaneously capable of pervading major national institutions.

5.7. Impolite Culture and the Villa Garden.

First published by *Punch* between 1888 and 1889, George and Weedon Grossmiths' affectionate spoof, *Diary of a Nobody*, described a way of life in which 'Home, Sweet Home' was the motto. Mr. and Mrs. Pooter lived in peaceable obscurity in their new house called

> "The Laurels", Brickfield Terrace, Holloway - a nice six-bedroomed residence, not counting basement, with a front breakfast parlour. We have a little front garden; and there is a flight of ten steps up to the front door, which, by-the-by, we keep locked with the chain up.[124]

The front garden was used on formal occasions only because 'Cummings, Gowing and our other intimate friends always come to the little side entrance, which saves the servant the trouble of going up to the front door, thereby taking her from her work.' Charles Pooter, a clerk in a mercantile business in the City, liked nothing better than to be at home with his wife and friends, either in the garden or occupied by some job about the house. Much of his time was spent pottering in the garden.

> We have a nice little back garden which runs down to the railway. We were rather afraid of the noise of the trains at first, but the landlord said we should not notice them after a bit, and took £2 off the rent. He was certainly right; and beyond a little cracking of the garden wall at the bottom, we have suffered no inconvenience.[125]

For the first three weeks of his tenancy, until the acquisition of 'a capital little book, in good condition, on *Gardening*', 'picked up at a bookstall for fivepence', Mr. Pooter

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[123]George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man*, (New York: Boni and Liveright Inc., 1917), p. 146.

[124]George and Weedon Grossmith, *Diary of a Nobody*, (1888-89; Wordsworth Classics, 1994), p. 1.

[125]Grossmith, *Diary of a Nobody*, (1888-89), p. 1.

was content to grow mustard and cress. In a flash, George Grossmith implied, Pooter had learned the required gardening language, though not the skills, and 'procured and sowed some half-hardy annuals in what I fancy will be a warm sunny border'. We do not learn the outcome of these first gardening steps, only that he subsequently spent much time there after work. One year later, however, Pooter was confident enough in his achievements to invite visitors into his back garden, only to be publicly humiliated there by his neighbours (fig. 5.30).

> Walking round the garden with Mr. and Mrs. Treane, members of our congregation who had walked back with us, I was much annoyed to find a large newspaper full of bones on the gravel path, evidently thrown over by the young Griffin boys next door; who, whenever we have friends, climbing the empty steps inside their conservatory, lap at the windows, making faces, whistling, and imitating birds.[126]

We learn from this that the Pooters were overlooked from the trains at the bottom of the garden and directly by the windows and lean-to 'conservatory' of their semi-detached neighbours; to the left of the house was the side access and, assumedly, the next pair of semi-detached houses (fig. 5.30).

The Grossmiths' diary of a fictional nobody, a Mr. Pooter of Brickfield Terrace, Holloway (fig. 5.28), charted the domestic life of what Thomas Burke called elsewhere 'the cartoonist's John Citizen', a sort of suburban everyman or John Bull.[127] There were antecedents to these late nineteenth-century suburban 'types'. In 1864, for instance, Shirley Hibberd invented an 'excellent friend' in the shape of 'J. Brickwell, Esq., of Tottenham who had the most perfect *bijou* of a rose garden' in his inner-suburban plot.[128] Diaries of real people recorded the occurrence of similarly impolite incidents to those suffered by Pooter; they were usually perpetrated by children. These examples serve to illustrate that the desire for suburban privacy was not unconnected with the fact that it was continually under threat. Perhaps this was why the number of gardening books for children proliferated in the period. Children

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[126]*Ibid.*, p. 149.

[127]Burke, *Son of London*, 1948, p. 254.

[128]*Floral World*, 7 (2), 1864, 24.

were rarely addressed directly by the periodical press until the last decades of the nineteenth century but scores of books catering variously for the parent and child, the child and the school child were in circulation by 1914.[129] In spite of the growing number of books and the popularisation of children's gardening by the royal family, it would seem that horticulture was not foremost in children's minds when in the garden.

In her autobiography, published as *A London Family 1870-1900*, Molly Hughes described playing with her brothers 'in the house or garden' of their semi-detached home.[130] This playing involved 'adventures of a kind that were not forbidden mainly because mother didn't know about them', but they were 'plentiful enough, and usually carried out in the back garden.' The Hughes family lived in a house of similar style to the Pooters and was located nearby in 'our London suburb of Canonbury' (fig. 5.29). Their means varied according to Father's serial appointments so that 'during a lean year' the household could be 'devoid even of servants', but they retained their respectable status throughout, living at Canonbury until Father was run over and killed in the street. Most of the fun in the Canonbury garden appears to have revolved around an acacia tree which stood at the foot of its back garden. 'Into this the boys would climb and then swing themselves over into the street - a considerable drop.'[131]

Alice Wykeham-Martin's 'Victorian Youth' as the daughter of influential Broad Church philanthropic parents in a suburb of Swindon was similarly adventurous. Aged 102 when she wrote her memoirs in the 1970s, Alice Pollock, as she had become, reminded a new generation of feminists that

> It is popularly supposed that girls of our generation stayed at home, led idle and useless lives, and that their only occupation was "doing the flowers". This was certainly not so in my family, or among my contemporaries.[132]

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[129]Of the many advice manuals dedicated to childrearing in both centuries, gardening was frequently included as a agreable juvenile application. Prominent in this category was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1777) whose influence succeeded him into the next century in the works of Maria and Richard Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Cobbett, Jane Loudon and many others.

[130]Hughes, *A London Family*, 1946, p. 31.

[131]*Ibid.*, p. 32.

[132]Alice Pollock, *Portrait of My Victorian Youth*, (Johnson, 1971), pp. 88-89.

Like their parents, the Wykeham-Martin sisters were closely involved in church activities, including running the Sunday school. Alice recalled how she had at the same time 'kept up my natural history studies, and attended classes in botany.'[133] Although her mother was a keen gardener who, in spite of keeping a gardener and boy, took all her own cuttings of geraniums, calceolarias and lobelia for the following season's bedding displays, her daughter did not become so until her fifties.[134] One tiny paragraph of her book was devoted to the children's proper horticultural work: 'We had our small gardens, not a great attraction, though we grew our own radishes.'[135] The rest of her garden memories were taken up with 'the constant excitement and daredevilry of doing many things that were strictly forbidden' such as stealing and cooking potatoes or fruit. She reasoned that having 'more freedom than one would have expected from such a strict regime allowed us more adventurous life than it is possible to allow a child in the present day' (1971).[136] This freedom apparently included annoying the neighbours when '[o]n washing days we amused ourselves [by] catapulting the washing hanging up in [next-door's] garden'.[137]

Twenty-nine year old Marion Sambourne and her son Roy kept birds, tortoises, a frog and beetles in the tiny back garden of their Kensington villa, where they went spider-hunting. When not occupied with natural history Roy created more work for his mother in the garden which, aided by the house-maid, was her charge. Exasperated diary entries for 1881 record how 'Roy broke flower pot, thankful he was not hurt' or 'Conservatory window put in, Roy pulled out putty after'.[138] The behaviour of these middling-class children, however, seems tame compared with the more boisterous exercise enjoyed by twelve year old Ernest Baker in the early 1880s. In his diary, published as *A Victorian Schoolboy in London 1881-82*, Ernest set out his Pooterish

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[133]Pollock, *Victorian Youth*, 1971, p. 89.

[134]*Ibid.*, p. 20.

[135]*Ibid.*, p. 56.

[136]*Ibid.*, p. 49.

[137]*Ibid*, p. 50.

[138]Shirley Nicholson, *A Victorian Household*, (Barrie and Jenkins, 1988), pp. 43 and 76.

'intention to give a full and faithful account of the remarkable events of my life, although the course of my life is no more remarkable than any one else's life but however I hope it may interest someone.' Ernest was the son of the chaplain to the Ironmonger's Company and grew up in the Geffrye Almshouses, on Kingsland Road, Hackney, where the manuscript for Ernest Baker's Diary remains. The introduction to the published version tells us that the Bakers 'were tolerably well off, employing at least two live in servants and educating their seven children privately. To supplement his income Henry Baker also acted as Chaplain to '"The Refuge", a residential home for destitute girls founded in 1805 to reform female criminals into domestic servants.'[139] Although Ernest's behaviour may have seemed inappropriate in a Reverend's son, the family was progressive in its thinking and perhaps thought that such free-expression in its children was healthy. Even so, his free-reign at home does seem remarkable, especially as the garden was in close proximity to the elderly, mainly female, pensioners who were his father's charges. On Saturday January 14th 1882, Ernest recorded, with characteristically lazy grammar and punctuation, that

> After breakfast played with pole I have invented a new game with it, it is this, make a large brick fortress must be quite solid and strongly built (I will soon give illustrations [fig. 5.31]) having built your fortress about as high as yourself and the bricks four deep, mount the pole then when you have worked it up to a good high pace, CHARGE the fortress and the consequences are such Went out and bought Grace some brass headed nails to hang up her bookcase. Then climbed trees.[140]

Five days later a stop was put to these exploits, though not before more havoc had been wreaked:

> I did Geometrical drawings till 1/4 past 4, then read and played with the pole, this time I made a doubly strong and big fortress, actually useing up every brick in the place, having built the fortress I proceeded to mount the pole and then to work it, in less time than it would take to describe, the pole charged with mighty force into the massive brickwork and sent a shower of bricks in all directions of the place, yet there was another half to be destroyed and being the

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[139]David Rodgers, (ed.), 'Introduction', *A Victorian Schoolboy in London, the Diary of Ernest Baker 1881-82*, (Geffrey Museum, c. 1989), p. 10. The Bakers normally employed reformed women as domestic staff.

[140]Rodgers, (ed.), *Victorian Schoolboy*, 1989, p. 57.

> bottom half it was naturally much stronger so when I or rather the pole charged at that it left me in nearly the same position as you will see illustrated [fig. 5.31].[141]

Judging from his disparaging diary entries regarding the 'old biddies' or 'bundles of hot rags' it seems likely that Ernest was not unduly respectful of his pensioner neighbours' sensibilities. Moreover he enjoyed misbehaving in public, and on several occasions was reprimanded for disrupting public lectures at the Royal Institution in Mayfair and Agricultural Hall in Islington for 'I suppose clapping by myself and laughing at the lecturer and sundry other things which it would be needless to describe'.[142] Ernest evidently paid far greater attention to his *Boys Own Paper* than either his schoolmaster or public lecturers. Nevertheless, his final exploit in the garden with the pole, came on unspecified orders from within the house. 'Having picked myself up and also most of the bricks I obeyed the order and came in (the order was given after the first charge).'[143]

5.8. Gardens of the Mind.

Whatever the discrepancy between present-day notions of appropriate behaviour for children and their reality, even in the back garden where activities were partially screened from parents, it is clear the gardens themselves could rarely have achieved the perfection suggested by contemporary images. Some paid no attention to their garden at all, even when, like Molly Hughes' adopted 'aunts' they were passionate about botany. The 'two sisters, were the last members of a family to occupy an enormous house at the corner of one of the more dignified of the Bloomsbury Squares'. Hughes was appalled to note that she never saw one sister 'reading anything of interest except a guide book' and that although the other was usually 'unobtrusively pursuing her hobbies', she utterly neglected the garden. Not even a window-box or potted geranium featured in her hobbies although she curated a *hortus siccus* inside the house. 'Among these was botany, of which she had

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[141] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[142] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[143] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

an extensive knowledge in spite of the fact that her only garden consisted of a few yards of "leads", richly endowed with London soot.'[144] Molly Hughes had travelled all over Switzerland with the elderly aunts, which landscape satisfied both passions for guidebooks and botany. While one sister studied her guide books, the other 'found remote places where we could gather the small blue gentian, *Linnaea borealis*, and even the very rare edelweiss' in the foothills of Mont Blanc.[145] She even brought Dutch bulb catalogues from home in order to prepare her autumn order from the list of those not discovered in the field. Hughes' astonishment at the existence of a botanist who was not also a gardener probably indicates that such a lack of gardening spirit was particularly unusual. Even so, there were plenty of reluctant and lackadaisical gardeners who loved their garden in spite of its faults.

The novelist Mrs. Oliphant had only vague memories of the gardens she had lived in. Like many London widows she and her children were forced to make regular decampments around the suburbs, taking the time to make a home and garden at the beginning of each lease. While she remembered one garden in particular, mainly because she had been happy there, even this memory tells the reader little about the place, beyond the fact that it was the 'typical' garden of the London suburbs.

> In the beginning of the winter of 1861 I went to Ealing, and settled down there in a tiny house on the Uxbridge Road. It had a small drawing-room opening on a rather nice garden, a long strip of ground truly suburban, with a pretty plot of grass, a hedge of lilacs, syringas, and vegetables beyond that, - very humble, but I had no pretensions. I think by moments I must have been quite happy here. I remember the cluster of us on the grass, my little Maggie [...] and the two boys.[146]

There were additional reasons for her remembering the two years spent at the house and garden there, not including her mourning the deaths of two children. She had visitors, the publisher's daughter, 'Miss Blackwood for two months, and much driving up and down to

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[144]Hughes, *A London Family*, 1946, p. 495.

[145]*Ibid.*, p. 508.

[146]Elisabeth Jay (ed.), *The Autobiography of Mrs Oliphant*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 100.

London to the Exhibition of 1862, which I loathed; but she enjoyed and dragged me'.[147] Also, the winter of 1860-61 was one of the coldest on record, and the children contracted measles around the time of the Prince of Wales' marriage.[148] Her relative happiness was the main factor for her garden thoughts however, and she recalled that 'we kept pigeons for the first and only time, and the pretty creatures were fluttering about, and the house standing all open doors and windows, and the sunshine and peace over all'.[149] In 1865 she moved the remaining children to Windsor, to be close to Eton where the boys were at school. She remembered this garden better, partly because she was living only two doors away in the same stucco crescent at the time of writing. The house had 'a pleasant little garden behind' but she liked the Crescent garden better. This was

> a piece of ground of considerable extent, which we called, I don't know why, the plantation, beautifully planted, and, considering its position, a wonderful little piece of landscape gardening - of which we took possession by acclamation.[150]

Being a very private person, Oliphant would probably have avoided the plantation had it been used by other residents but 'we had it almost altogether by ourselves'. 'Very few people used it in those days: the day of lawn tennis was not yet, and I suppose most of the people were elderly' and preferred their back gardens. In concluding this chapter of her life she also gave her reason for remembering it. 'It lies under my windows now,' she wrote of the plantation, 'but I can't trust myself to go into it', because of the memories planted there. Most autobiographies, but particularly Mrs. Oliphant's, play with the notion of time, consciously or unconsciously reading future events from present circumstances. Oliphant's scenes of happy domesticity often prefigured terrible family crises, with the result that these situations, landscapes and gardens especially, were tarnished by the unhappy memories they rekindled.

> I never knew of how much importance it was in the first chapter of my boys' life, this bit of town garden with its fine trees and wild

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[147]Jay, *Mrs Oliphant*, 1990, p. 104.

[148]*Ibid.*, p. 103.

[149]*Ibid.*, p. 100.

[150]*Ibid.*, p. 122.

> nooks and corners. Lately my Cecco has told me of so many things that were done there', "when we were small".[151]

Those things remain in the landscape whose threshold she cannot bear to cross. 'I have curious superstitions about localities' she wrote at another time. 'I used to have a dizzy feeling sometimes in later years when I passed our old house in Ulster Place', 'looking down Harley Street' from the south-west edge of Regent's Park.[152]

Born in 1880, Leonard Woolf related his feelings for the garden of 'the comfortable bourgeois home in Lexham Gardens, not very far from Hyde Park Gate',[153] where the family lived until 1892. Each of the nine Woolf children 'was given a few feet of bed for his own personal "garden" and there we sowed seeds or grew pansies bought off barrows in the Earl's Court Road.' Yet, although he stressed that he 'was very fond of this garden and of my "garden",' Woolf remembered the garden in and of itself in far from adulatory tones.

> Behind the house in Lexham Gardens was a long parallelogram enclosed by the house on the north and on the other three sides by three grimy six foot walls. It was a typical London garden of that era, consisting of a worn parallelogram of grass surrounded by narrow gravel paths and then narrow beds of sooty, sour soil against the walls.[154]

Despite or perhaps because of the pathetic nature of this sketch, the sense of loss next recorded was all the more poignant. 'I can remember returning one late, chilly September afternoon to Lexham Gardens from our holiday and rushing out eagerly to see the back garden':

> There it lay in its grimy solitude. There was not a breath of air. There were no flowers; a few spindly lilac bushes drooped in the beds. The grimy ivy drooped on the grimy walls. And all over the walls from ivy leaf to ivy leaf were large or small spider webs.[155]

Of course, we can read this passage as a metaphor for the end of an era and of childhood: his father would soon die, and he was shortly to move both house and

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[151]*Ibid.*.

[152]*Ibid.*, pp. 110, 61.

[153]Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, (1996; Vintage, 1997), p. 299.

[154]Leonard Woolf, *Sowing*, 1962, p. 26.

[155]Woolf, *Sowing*, 1962, p. 27.

school, and the autobiography is divided accordingly. This need not detract from the attachment which he had clearly had for the grimy garden and which he clearly felt at the time of writing. As records of the personal and psychic attachments made with their homes and gardens, Woolf's accounts, like Oliphant's, are valid even with their acquired patinas of time.

Woolf's future wife and her sister, Virginia and Vanessa Stephen wrote strikingly different accounts of the same tiny garden which adjoined their substantial villa in Hyde Park Terrace, in 'Tyburnia'. These accounts varied according to the sisters' individual personalities and to the violent mood swings which coloured their views; psychological factors naturally affected initial perceptions of their environment at a given moment but they were equally influential in retrospectively defining it. Family access to the garden was down cast-iron steps. These led off the back drawing-room through French-windows battling with Virginia creeper. The basement, which contained the service quarters and the seven maids' sitting-room, had a dim view of the family garden through iron trellis, which was further obscured 'in summer' by the 'curtain of creeper [which] made the room like a green wave'.[156] Woolf's biographer tells us that

> Off the back drawing-room was a little side room, which was handed over to Virginia and Vanessa, and which Vanessa remembered as a "cheerful little room, almost entirely made of glass" with a skylight, windows looking on to the back garden, and a window cut into the wall between it and the drawing-room.[157]

'In this room,' Vanessa recalled, 'we used to sit, I painting and she reading aloud. We read most of the Victorian novelists in this way & I can still hear much of George Eliot & Thackeray in her voice'. Yet Virginia Stephen remembered the adjoining back drawing-room and its Virginia-creepered view of the garden as 'dark and agitated'. The garden itself was simply a 'little, dust-smelling, patchy square of wall-circled back garden'.[158] She seems to have preferred the open spaces of nearby Hyde Park and

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[156]Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 1997, p. 40.

[157]*Ibid.*, p. 42.

[158]*Ibid.*, p. 41.

Kensington Gardens in which she, like Leonard Woolf, had spent long, happy hours during childhood.

The writer Olive Garnett (1871-1958) had an ambivalent attitude to the Bloomsbury garden which she enjoyed during the early 1890s, perhaps because it was not the family's own. Although we glean little about the garden's topography from her dairy, it maintains a periodical presence because it offered respite from her domestic duties, and was the place where she best liked to read. As Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum between 1890 and 1899, Olive's father was provided with a living within the Museum. On promotion to this post, the family gave up their home at St. Edmund's Terrace, Primrose Hill and their Residence in the Museum's East Wing served Garnett, his wife, and five children, as home. The 'garden' was a 'Quad' between the East and West Wings, onto which the Garnett's drawing-room opened, yet was still relatively private ('I reading, the sunshine & cold wind playing in the Quad. In former years I should have dressed prettily, now-a-days I do not attempt to rise to occasions'[159]). It served other Museum people in more practical ways: Olive noted how a Trustee, 'Lord Crawford, came again this morning to photograph books on the grass plot.' When the weather was cold and wet the drawing-room, its French-windows opened to the sky, replaced the Quad as the favourite place for informal entertaining. Despite the fact that Olive did not bestow a literary gloss upon the Museum garden, the reader is left in no doubt as to her casual affection for the place. For a start it was usually referred to as the 'G.P.', the grass plot upon which so much so much of Olive's diverse reading matter was consumed. On Sunday June 24, 1894, for example, she 'did the clothes' and, after tea,

> I sat on the G.P. & read Mrs. Macdonald's article on the Brontes in Brussels, Dr. Todhunter's *Sicilian Idyll*, & part of Swinburne's *Critical Essay* upon Blake. I enjoyed feeding pigeons as usual; it was a quiet, peaceful summer's day. I felt young & good & gentle.[160]

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[159]Barry C. Johnson (ed.), *Olive & Stepniak: The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1893-1895*, (Birmingham: Bartletts Press, 1993), p. 170.

[160]Johnson, *Bloomsbury Diary*, 1993, pp. 93-94.

Olive made a surrogate garden at her Uncle Edward's Highgate home, 'Holly Lodge'. In spring she '[r]aked the beds & sowed the seeds in the ground & marked the spots', and looked forward to 'spring flowers, spring clothes, spring sunshine.'[161] She also spent a deal of time in the London Parks. Whether she was walking in Waterlow Park to the north, collecting heather in Kidbrooke Park to the south east, or visiting friends in Bedford Park, Turnham Green to the west, these green London spaces, like the G.P., functioned at once as alternatives to the daily grind, and as places for reading, and watching, and personal reflection; Hyde Park she reserved for her circle's Socialist political activities. On a Monday in mid-May 1894, she made a matter-of-fact diary entry: 'Mended. Washed my hair. Lucy & I went & sat in Kensington Gardens in the afternoon, in green and gold lights, watching the people. (Best clothes.)' Only the previous evening, Olive had been at her nearest and most favourite open space at Regent's Park, which she regularly crossed on the way to her dressmakers in St. John's Wood. Rather than watching the promenades of fashionable society, however, she '[s]pent the evening with democracy in Regent's Park [...] Democracy was very dull [...] but I enjoyed a sort of inward peace that I experienced in myself'. She was evidently able to lose herself amidst the landscape of the Park and the working classes who also spent their Sundays there.[162] The following March, Olive set off for Hampstead from her Uncle's Highgate villa.

> Went for a walk to the heath. High wind. Blue and white hyacinths out. Pink and purple partially. A yellow crocus out. Trees budding & creeper leaves half out. Bought the "Amateur Gardener." Wind like train rushing down the road, almost drowned soft piano movement. Poplar tops waving gracefully [...][163]

Most of Olive Garnett's London suburban rambles were made alone, and it seems that this pastime, even more than her surrogate gardening at Holly Lodge, allowed her to cultivate an imaginary garden.

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[161] *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 168.

[162] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[163] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

Remembering his Edwardian suburban childhood in Grove Park, James Kenward described how back gardens

> may not be entirely secret from the next-door-neighbours, but think how secret they are from the front, from the casual caller and passer-by in the street. Outside Suburbia there is no very clear distinction between caller and visitor; but inside Suburbia the front and back gardens provide almost a definition [...] the visitor is he or she who is admitted to whatever secrets there may happen to be at the back. Among the children the back-garden is, or was, even more significant. Admitting another child to your back-garden you pledged your friendship, you ratified it, confirmed it, raised to an altogether higher plane.[164]
>
> An invitation to back-garden friendship was, of course, much more than an honour. It was exciting. It was usually preceded by promises of wonders to be seen, or at least peeped at, perhaps handled - for example a father's hobby, such as carpentering, in a shed. The wonders were usually exaggerated. But they might not be. You never knew ...[165]

This ordinary, middling class of suburban garden, opened up whole new worlds to members of the family and their friends who moved within it.

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[164]James Kenward, *The Suburban Child*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 111.

[165]Kenward, *Suburban Child*, 1955, p. 114.

6. 'The Scenery of the Torrid Zone': Imagined Travels and the Culture of Exotics within Nineteenth-Century Gardens.

> 'The introduction of a new hardy tree or shrub, or the acclimating of one hitherto supposed too tender for the open air, may [...] be considered one of the most patriotic of gardening efforts.'
> (John Claudius Loudon, 1, 1826, 5).

The theory and practice of gardening through the nineteenth century was marked not just by an extraordinary pace of change, but also by the sheer tenacity of the idea that the introduction of foreign plant material into British soil, and more precisely British domestic soil, was the ultimate horticultural expression of patriotic endeavour. With an almost missionary zeal professional and amateur gardeners set about transplanting and cultivating plants from across the globe. What Lucille Brockway has called 'botanical imperialism' was not a new phenomenon as horticulture had benefited from foreign introductions from at least the middle-ages.[1] But the availability and quality of 'new' plants vastly increased as the European empires expanded their territories and interests.

Chapters Six and Seven are linked theoretically and thematically, and chart the process of what was heralded as the British gardening spirit in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars to what was increasingly described as an English gardening movement at the end of the nineteenth century. Six explores the process of horticultural imperialism from 1815 to about 1870 and Seven picks up the story from 1861 until the end of our period, 1914. The first part of Chapter Six discusses the contemporary notion that horticulture, the culture of a garden and its plants, was an important expression of patriotic endeavour: acclimatising and improving native and alien plants was not only of spiritual and creative benefit to individual amateurs at home in their gardens, it was held to be of immense importance to the national economy and, therefore, an invaluable component of the broader economy of national and imperial patriotism.

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[1]Lucille H. Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: the Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens*, (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 168.

Second, we look at how plants were exoticised for consumption by a gardening public delighted by the presence of the unusual and the exciting in the domestic environment in the first half of the century. Next, we consider the possibilities for sensory transportation which exotic and exotically-seeming plants presented to those associated with them, particularly from within the domestic interior. 'Naturalising at Home' looks at how the exploration and discovery normally associated with overseas endeavour was transferred to the native landscape, and at how botanising, naturalising and gardening all contributed to the idea of the imperial project: exploring, discovering and improving the products of uncultivated lands for British consumption. Finally the chapter discusses the familiarisation, domestication and naturalisation of exotics in the home landscape and how globally diverse plants were incorporated into the identity of the so-called 'English' garden.

6.1. Horticultural Imperialism and British Industry.

Commercial horticulture developed rapidly in the period after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, funded by private individuals, the state, and the nursery trade. Countless exotic plants were successfully imported from overseas, many of which required glazed protection in their new, temperate, climates. Initially, exotics were displayed in imitation tropical landscapes under glass. Kew Gardens, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, and the London's nurserymen's showrooms, for instance, all contained spectacular glasshouses filled with fully grown exotics which the public could explore for pleisure and edification (figs. 5.16-5.18 and 6.1-6.3). On visiting one of London's most famous horticultural emporia in 1829, the German tourist Jacob Rinz was breathtaken:

> The first garden I visited was that of Messrs. Loddiges, and never shall I forget the sensation produced in me by this establishment. I cannot describe the raptures I experienced on seeing that immense Palm House [...] I fancied myself in the Brazils; and especially at that moment when Mr. L. had the kindness to produce [...] a shower of artificial rain.[2]

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[2] *Gardener'sMagazine*, 4, 1829, 379.

Such conservatories provided polite entertainment where gardening as a scientific pastime was rapidly popularised among those who were to acquire conservatories for their own private, consumption (figs. 6.4 and 6.5). With experience, horticulturists found they could also recreate the scenery of the tropics or 'torrid zone' out-of-doors.

Environmental determinism was the primary criterion for the classification of plants as Exotic. Although properly emanating from the tropics, plants might be deemed 'exotic' purely on account of their appearance. Species with strange or 'prehistoric' characteristics were prized as exotic, regardless of their actual geographic or climatic requirements. They were suggestive of foreign landscapes in much the same fashion as true exotics. The cultivation of all 'exotics' in British soil helped frame the unknown world in a familiar context, and their culture in the home landscape allowed for a personal as well as a national understanding of faraway places. This offered a very private form of imperial display which quietly expanded the horizons of its audience and allowed for a form of imaginative travel beyond, yet framed by, the realm of home. The Other landscapes suggested by exotics and their arrangement within the garden were arguably as important in shaping the imaginative geographies of British imperialism as exploration and travel abroad.

Horticulture, like natural history, developed in an ad hoc fashion, seeking, collecting, cataloguing and improving specimens for British consumption. Combining a civilising bent with absolute conviction in the idea of technological progress, the culture of exotics as explained in the gardening press was intent on adapting alien stock to British conditions. Interest in acclimatisation was not confined to horticulture. The general subject was of great interest in nineteenth-century Europe, and the acclimatisation of animals and people, as well as plants was widely reported.[3] Moreover, as Michael Osborne shows, 'when the notion spread to Britain [from France ...] gentlemen breeders led the way, appropriating the subject to their own concerns,

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[3]Michael A. Osborne, *Nature, the Exotic, and the Science of French Colonialism*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994); M. A. Osborne, 'Climates of Opinion: Acclimatization in 19th-Century France and England', *Victorian Studies*, 35 (2), 1991, 135-159.

seeking out unchanging ornamental plants for the garden and animals for the hunt.'[4] Edward Said's interest in 'the function of space, geography and location' is primarily literary, but we can extend his reading of *Mansfield Park* to more material forms of cultural imperialism. The Park, he says, 'is located by Austen at the centre of an arc of interests and concerns spanning the hemisphere, two major seas, and four continents.' Further, '[s]he sees clearly that to hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it.'[5] John MacKenzie argues that 'gentleman geologists formed mental connections between private estates and imperial possessions and developed a "taxonomic acquisitiveness" from their ambition to survey not only every colony but also all unexplored areas of the globe.'[6] What Said describes as 'the importance of an empire to the situation at home'[7] was not confined to the estates of gentlefolk; mental connections were also formed in the smallest of gardens, through pots and window boxes and Wardian cases, 'open[ing] up a broad expanse of domestic imperialist culture without which Britain's subsequent acquisition of territory would not have been possible.'[8]

Love of gardening was seen as evidence of a highly civilised, economically buoyant and patriotic society. According to the *Gardener's Magazine*,

> Horticulture, as a means of subsistence, is one of the first arts attempted by man on emerging from barbarism; and landscape gardening, as an act of design, is one of the latest inventions for the display of wealth and taste in ages of luxury and refinement.[9]

Further, it had 'diffused itself through all ranks of society, [to] become the favourite recreation of the merchant, of the private gentleman, and the man of letters.'[10] Unlike so many other fashionable amusements gardening was a rational, health-giving and

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[4]Osborne, 'Climates of Opinion', 137.

[5]Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (1993; Vintage, 1994 edn.), pp. 101, 104.

[6]John M. MacKenzie, (ed.), 'Introduction', *Imperialism and the Natural World*, (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 9.

[7]Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 106.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 114.

[9]*Gardener's Magazine*, 1, 1826, 1.

[10]*Ibid.*, 57.

patriotic exercise enjoyed, as we saw in Chapter Five, by men and women alike; gardeners were performing a national duty for the 'taste thus excited by the zeal of amateurs has naturally rendered the introduction of rare plants an important object of commerce'.[11] Very different writers have argued that 'a wide variety of non-governmental agencies discovered that imperial patriotism was also [financially] profitable [...] as well as immensely popular':[12] 'Patriotism, for this [commercial] social class as for so many other Britons, paid.[13] Even in gardens of 'homeopathic dimensions' amateur horticulture was promoted as both a patriotic duty and a domestic pleasure. Hence the *Floral World* recommended its practice in the 'little garden and flowery windows' of the smallest of London suburban villas. 'Floriculture is at once a high art, and a simple recreation. It contributes largely to the commerce of great nation, and to the pleasurable occupation of the leisure hour.'[14] Practically and ideologically the garden was central to private understandings of nation, Empire and of the wider world as a site of imperial potential.

The *Floral World* provided an effective channel for the popular expression of these ideas. In 1859 it celebrated the range and scope of the suburban garden:

> O polar frost, and O torrid sunshine! O bright orient and O mysterious occident, your delicatest darlings here blossom side by side [...] for the garden is a living microcosm of the world, a living map of climes and seasons, a gathering of all things curious, and useful and beautiful from "the cedar that is in Lebanon, to the hyssop that groweth on the wall."[15]

The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening, by Edith Chamberlain and Fanny Douglas made exactly the same point in 1892. 'Every quarter of the globe is ransacked for floral treasures; and all the loveliest, rarest, most delicate plants must be made to gratify our

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[11] *Ibid.*, 55.

[12] John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984; 1994 edn), p. 3.

[13] Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992), p. 302.

[14] *Floral World*, 5 (2), 1862, 23-24.

[15] *Floral World*, 2 (9), 1859, 198.

eyes and senses in the variable climate of this little island.'[16] William Robinson, whose life's work was devoted to the naturalisation in Britain of hardy plants from around the globe, acknowledged the role of the garden in constructing ideas about the world when he noted that although 'it is given to few to see many of these sweet plants in their native lands [...] those who love our gardens may enjoy many of them about us, not merely in drawings or descriptions, but the living, breathing things themselves.'[17] The creation of one's own garden, planted with fashionable but individually chosen specimen evergreens, tropical climbers and Cape heaths, brought together an idiosyncratic selection of Empire spoils which symbolised the riches procured for the benefit of the homeland. Robinson's recommendation that 'in such [domestic] plantations one might have in the back parts "secret" colonies of lovely things which it might not be well to show in the front of the border,'[18] suggests a private understanding of what he called 'the great garden of the world itself.'[19] This was 'a world of delightful plant beauty that we might make happy around us [...] which we should [otherwise] have little chance of seeing.'[20] Here, at the furthest reaches of the garden, voyages of exploration were made; strange plants remained hidden in thickets until extravagant flowers or fruit gave them away.

The search for plants for British gardens was not confined to the British Empire proper, although formal imperialism certainly facilitated their extraction and transplantation. As gardening was held to signify advanced civilisation, plant hunters frequently looked to the lands of other empires for wild and cultivated specimens. The mainstay of British and continental European botanical imperialism from the early to mid-nineteenth century was the Americas. North America provided a wide variety of hardy plants suitable for introduction to the English climate. However, the United

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[16]Edith Chamberlain and Fanny Douglas, *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*, (Henry & Co., 1892), p. 29.

[17]William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, (John Murray, 1883; 1899 edn.), p. 292.

[18]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. viii.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 155.

[20]*Ibid.*.

States also proffered plants considered suitable because, being a civilised nation, the plants would already have undergone some cultivation. A remark made by George Canning to the American Ambassador Richard Rush summed this up perfectly, even allowing for diplomatic niceties. When Rush made a formal visit to the Cannings' villa 'residence at Gloucester Lodge, two miles from town' in 1818, he was immediately invited through 'the drawing-rooms [which] opened on a portico, from which you walked out upon one of those smoothly shaven lawns which Johnson, speaking of Pope's poetry, likens to velvet.'[21] He was naturally invited to see the 'American' plants:

> "You see," said Mr. Canning, "how we prize your plants," pointing to some Rhododendrons; "you must be fond of horticulture in the United States, from the specimens we have of your flowers." I said it was a growing taste with us, but that we had much to do before we should equal England. And we in England, he said, are behind Holland, and I believe France, in flowers.[22]

6.2. Unnatural Selection and the Exotic Environment.

While advanced civilisations were respected for their horticultural and agricultural skills, 'primitive' countries were, conversely, described as having plants in an aboriginal state of development. This was most fully expressed by Darwin in *The Origin of Species* but was a view that underpinned much horticultural writing of the period:

> If it has taken centuries or thousands of years to improve or modify most of our plants up to their present standard of usefulness to man, we can understand how it is that neither Australia, the Cape of Good Hope, nor any other region inhabited by quite uncivilised man, has afforded us a single plant worth culture. It is not that these countries, so rich in species, do not by a strange chance possess the aboriginal stocks of any useful plants, but that the native plants have not been improved by continued selection up to a standard of perfection comparable with that given to plants in countries anciently civilised.[23]

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[21]Richard Rush, *A Residence at the Court of London*, (1833; Century, 1987), p. 125.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 126.

[23]Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, (1859; Penguin, 1985), pp. 95-6.

In Darwin's book uncivilised lands offered up weeds. But weeds were useful precisely because they illustrated the gulf between the primitive plants of the new world and those selected by 'anciently civilised' lands. The plants were anthropomorphised accordingly. Where the English landscape offered a civilised welcome to the explorer, the tropical wilderness, in its ignorant suspicion, sought to outwit him. Witness the English naturalist Henry Walter Bates remarking that for a fellow European explorer

> the contemplation of a Brazilian forest produced in him a painful impression on account of the vegetation displaying a spirit of restless selfishness, eager emulation, and craftiness. He thought the softness, earnestness, and repose of European woodland scenery were far more pleasing, and that these formed one of the causes of the superior moral character of European nations.[24]

At home in England, William Morris wrote of

> plants which are curiosities only, which Nature meant to be grotesque, not beautiful, and which are generally the growth of hot countries where things sprout over-quick and rank. Take note that the strangest of these come from the jungle and the tropical waste, from places where man is not at home, but is an intruder, an enemy.[25]

Morris did not say that they be banished completely, only that they were *out of place* in the domestic garden. 'Go to a botanic garden and look at them,' he said, 'and think of those strange places to your heart's content.' His argument also extended to the relocation of indigenous plants, 'Don't have ferns in your garden [...] these are right [only] *in their places*.'[26] Ferns were commonly suggested by other writers as exotic looking but hardy, cheap, and accessible alternatives to foreign plants. The common hemp, Cannabis sativa, was suggested as a particularly suitable and economical exotic for the London suburban garden. Shirley Hibberd explained how for his Stoke Newington garden he had

> obtained a cheap ornament to occupy a centre of a knoll for a season by sowing a dozen seeds of the common hemp, and the graceful

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[24]Henry Walter Bates, *The Naturalist in the Amazons*, 1863, quoted in Nicolette Scourse, *The Victorians and their Flowers*, (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 60.

[25]William Morris, 'Art and social reform', 1882, quoted in David Wheeler, (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Garden Writing*, (Penguin, 1996), p. 240.

[26]*Ibid.*, emphases mine.

> group of plants, six feet high of a rich dark green, has served me as well for the time as if it were composed of costly exotics.[27]

Likewise, William Robinson considered hemp especially

> useful where the tender sub-tropical plants cannot be easily grown, well-grown plants looking graceful, and are useful at the backs of borders; and a few look well as a separate group [...] It loves a warm sandy loam, and is one of few plants that thrive in small London gardens.[28]

Like ferns, hemp was suggestive of the wilds of untamed Britain as well as the tropical swamp.

The *Floral World* explained public preference for 'nearly hardy novelties' not on the grounds of easy cultivation and relative inexpense but their geographical origins; 'hence we find the introductions from Japan, Northern China, Australia, New Zealand, and the mountain lands of India, enjoying a far higher degree of popularity than those brought from tropical jungles and torrid swamps.'[29] In Africa the beautiful or 'useful' plants were held to originate chiefly from 'civilised' Algeria, Morocco, Egypt and, less frequently, the Cape. The preference for plants of high altitude was also a social one: tropical climates (signifying lassitude, stultification and disorder) generated an atmosphere in which the white settler supposedly could not thrive without periodic retreat to the hills. The behaviour of nomadic peoples and even subsistence farmers was anathema within the European's schema of progress. Cultural 'unwillingness' to domesticate permanently one's immediate environment through botanical selection was interpreted as being endemically barbaric. Further, barbarism led to botanical

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[27]Shirley Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, (Groombridge, 1856; 1857 edn.), p. 345.

[28]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 470.

[29]*Floral World*, 7 (9), 1864, 187. In Loudon's day Australia and New Zealand would not have been included in this list; only after settlement by the civilised white man did their environments begin to be considered favourably. Remember that only five years before this edition of the *Floral World* was published, Darwin could still assert that Australia produced no plants 'worth culture'. In the second half of the century however, New Zealand was increasinly described as 'the Britain of the south,' where one could 'retain [...] the memory of old England and all its dear associations,' by clothing it 'with the foliage of the mother country.' *Floral World*, 1 (12), 1858, 282.

ignorance, and not only on the part of 'the natives': wholly uncivilised landscapes inhibited proper exploration. Hence Loudon, a Scot, had been

> informed by very many Englishmen that "it is safer to travel among savages than in the west coast of Ireland, which is the reason why the botany of that country is as little known as that of Sardinia".[30]

In sum, Darwin, and the other naturalists cited here, measured a nation's advanced civility by its propensity for *unnatural* selection.

James Ryan has argued for imperial photography that 'landscape views were the counterpart to the representation of ethnographic types': '[i]mages of vegetative pandemonium [...] signified not only the rich potential of the land, but also the absence of indigenous industry and labour.'[31] Contemporary commentary extended this ethnographic model to individual nations' propensity for gardening. Michael Waters has explained this reading of human characteristics from the landscape as a sort of 'topographical phrenology'.[32] Alfred Smee's self-aggrandising tome, *My Garden: its Plan and Culture* (1872), subtitled 'together with a general description of its geology, botany and natural history' was a wide-ranging illustrated exploration of his Surrey garden in the manner of a scientific survey. Smee was a Medical Officer to the Bank of England who, like the Surgeon General Dr. Lettsom, transferred his talents for scientific observation and categorisation to the domestic environment. Predictably, Smee found in the circumscribed area of his garden scope for a chapter on 'The Gardens of Various Nations'. It concluded that

> We see that the love of gardening, or for nature, is not dependent either on a torrid, frigid, or temperate zone; but that in certain nations, as in certain individuals of a nation, it is more innate than in others; and we further see, that the art of gardening, while advancing in some nations, declines in others.[33]

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[30] *Gardener's Magazine*, 4, 1829, 309.

[31] James R. Ryan, 'Imperial landscapes: Photography, Geography and British Overseas Exploration, 1858-1872', in Morag Bell, R. Butlin and M. Heffernan, (eds.), *Geography and Imperialism, 1820-1940*, (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 62-63.

[32] Michael Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature*, (Aldershot, Hants: Scholar Press, 1988), p. 305.

[33] Alfred Smee, *My Garden: its Plan and Culture*, (Bell & Daldy, 1872), p. 596.

'In fact,' said Shirley Hibberd in *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste* (1856), 'none but the most sordid and abandoned [of nations] are utterly without a garden, or the best substitute that can be had for one.'[34] Finally, 'we are told upon excellent authority,' by the *Book of Gardening* (1900), 'that it is only among the most brutal and degraded races of savages that gardening is unknown.'[35]

'Civilised' non-European nations, on the other hand, were applauded for their horticultural skills but derided for their taste. In an extract from the journal of his voyage to Canton, published in the *Gardener's Magazine* (1827), 'to collect the double Camellias &c.', gardener James Main noted that 'on the first view of the coast of China the stranger concludes that the inhabitants are a nation of gardeners' and, 'stepping on shore', that the land was 'well-cultivated.' What it merited in cultivation, however, the Chinese landscape lacked in taste in equal measure, for 'nothing presents itself but a little world of insignificant intricacy.'[36] Note how the criticism of Chinese gardening used the same terminology as that of English suburban gardens seen in Chapter Four. 'In short,' said Main, 'except for the beauty and rarity of the plants, the visitor finds nothing interesting in their style of gardening: no scope of ornamental disposition; no rational design; the whole being an incongruous combination of unnatural association.'[37] After several pages of diatribe against 'this display of vitiated taste,' the journal conceded that, 'it must be owned that no nation possesses a greater number of vegetable blessings, nor have any people on earth turned such to more account' and, it continued, their plants have added 'to the wealth, the sanative luxury, and dietetic comfort, of half the world.'[38] Similar charges of 'insignificant intricacy' were levied against continental European horticultural styles, particularly those of southern France and Italy. 'Formal' design, - rigorously trained ornamental plants, 'ridiculously

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[34]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 328.

[35]W. Drury (ed.), *The Book of Gardening*, (1900), p. 2.

[36]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 2, 1827, 135-6.

[37]*Ibid.*, 137.

[38]*Ibid.*, 140.

fantastic trellis work',[39] and geometric planting - was, as has already been mentioned, held to be an inappropriate interference with the nature of the English landscape and its garden.

The Oriental gardens cultivated in Europe, then, were not likely to represent in verisimilitude the domestic landscapes of China or Japan. Instead, an Oriental garden might be suggested by a combination of exotic plants and architectural details. Shirley Hibberd, for example included 'Summer houses in the Chinese style' in *Rustic Adornments*. To complete their 'fantastic and pleasing effect,' he recommended they contain 'gaily disposed exotics', such as 'rose, jasminum, or clematis.'[40] These were appropriate plants for a Chinese structure in England, being hardy and popular climbers of temperate Asian origin. Such details, however, were more calculated to produce a fantastic effect than any sense of 'authenticity'. 'Exotic', 'Moorish', 'oriental', 'torrid', and 'tropical' were largely interchangeable terms, all suggesting something Other. Mr. Loudon, for example, described how

> a Chinese conservatory, filled and surrounded with Chinese plants, may very easily and very naturally be executed. A glazed Mosque, Pyramid, or Pagoda, containing palms &c., might give a pretty good idea of the scenery of the torrid zone. To design such things, only requires a little knowledge of the botanist and the traveller.[41]

Jane Loudon's *Ladies' Magazine of Gardening* (1841) was more pragmatic in its treatment of exotic embellishments for the flower-garden of a 'suburban villa'. It suggested how an 'enclosed space may be laid with asphalte, or paved with Alhambra mosaic tiles, which are warranted to resist frost, and which may be obtained at Singer's manufactory on the Surrey side of Vauxhall Bridge.'[42]

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[39] *Ibid.*, 136.

[40] Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, pp. 496-7.

[41] *Gardener's Magazine*, 4, 1829, 266.

[42] *Ladies' Magazine of Gardening*, 1, (1), 1841, 3-4. The author is the family friend Captain James Mangles.

6.3. Sensory Transportation.

Scenery deemed exotic was not confined to that emanating from the non-European world. Southern Europe was frequently exoticised in much the same fashion as the East. In 1829, the *Gardener's Magazine* recommended that

> exotic scenery may be expressed or represented in gardening, where local or other circumstances are favourable. Italian may consist of suitable structures, trellises etc., furnished with vines, portable orange, lemon, pomegranate, olive, and myrtle trees.[43]

Sixty years later *The English Flower Garden* suggested that the plants of southern Europe and southern Africa could conjure their home landscapes at one and the same time: 'the geraniums in the cottage window bring us the spicy fragrance of the South African hills; the lavender bush of the sunny hills of Provence where it is at home.'[44] Mary Louise Pratt has shown how, from the late-eighteenth century, 'one by one, the planet's life forms were to be drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European based patterns of global unity and order.' Further,

> the eye that held the system could familiarize ("naturalize") new sites/sights immediately upon contact, by incorporating them into the language of the system. The differences of distance factored themselves out of the picture: with respect to mimosas, Greece could be the same as Venezuela, West Africa, or Japan.[45]

Thus the act of planting the exotic in the garden would immediately temper any outlandishness it called to mind, its familiarity was a condition of its naturalisation.

Descriptions of exotic plants tended to occasion rather more flights of fancy in the British press than did those of temperate zone species and, as so often with cases of Orientalism, the East and its material culture were frequently charged with a lascivious and frequently feminised sexuality. In his 1831 'observation' of the shrub Brugmansia suaveolens, a *Gardener's Magazine* correspondent noted that one of his party 'was so affected by the sight, that, throwing himself onto a spacious arm-chair, felt moved to quote Virgil.' The correspondent himself was only marginally less ecstatic noting that,

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[43]*Gardener's Magazine*, 4, 1829, 266.

[44]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 292.

[45]Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes, Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (Routledge, 1992; 1995 edn.), p. 31.

'the delicate whiteness of its large pendulous bells, contrasted with its ample green foliage, and as viewed in the imperfect illumination of candlelight, made a grand and exhilarating spectacle, one that to us seemed Orientally luxurious.' A native of the Americas Brugmansia, or Datura, after its Indian name, was a known hallucinogen, even its scent intoxicates; Shirley Hibberd called it 'bewitching' (fig. 6.6).[46] Thus we may assume 'the fragrance of the blooms that pervaded the conservatory' that night lulled the party into forgetting they had never left Bury St. Edmunds and had been transported instead to the oriental luxury of some Brazilian forest, or other imagined torrid zone.[47]

Much has been written on the psychosexual resonance of flowers in the garden, being particularly concerned with representations of the luxuriant forms of exotic species, hanging heavily near the open window at dusk, or the solitary figure of the lily-white virgin standing expectantly in the garden (fig. 6.8).[48] Little of this literature, however, has presented the experience as in any way imaginatively liberating, at least from the perspective of women.[49] Such work has usually painted a picture of literary and figurative floral stereotypes whose effect was to morally stifle the women who were its subjects and patrons. Contemporary representations of this nature were often conveyed through the medium of verse; the forms of flowers ambiguously traced onto the page. A large sense of eroticised danger was felt at the time to issue from scent - heady or malodorous humours - that were all the more powerful for their invisibility. As noted in Yi-Fu Tuan's study of environmental perception *Topophilia*, scent, or 'odor has the power to evoke vivid, emotionally-charged memories of past events and scenes'.[50] Michael Water's thoughtful study of floral codes in *The Garden in Victorian Literature* shows that

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[46]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 176.

[47]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 6, 1831, 37.

[48]See for example, Susan. P. Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*, (London and NJ: Associated University Presses, 1987).

[49]The exception which proves the rule is Waters, *Garden in Victorian Literature*, 1988, pp. 37-47.

[50]Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia*, (NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 10.

> Though pampered exotics figure prominently in conservatory scenes in Victorian fiction - where they add considerably to the atmosphere of fairy-tale other-worldliness - the prevailing tone of hot-house imagery in Victorian literature is decidedly unflattering. Grown by force, exotics signify the false.[51]

Waters' chapter on the Scented Garden, however, illustrates how imaginative writers also imbued scented plants with a range of regenerative qualities. Concerning 'conservatory scenes in Victorian fiction,' he writes,

> fragrant exotics add considerably to a sense of sensuous other-worldliness. Though normally redolent of domesticity, odorous gardens are sometimes used to establish a fairy-world atmosphere freer and more heady than the atmosphere of the near-scentless bedded-out display garden.[52]

Further, 'the odorous garden has one other virtue to which nineteenth-century novelists frequently draw attention. That is the ability to bring the garden indoors'. Authors 'appear to have sensed that the most natural means of entwining the two environs was by encouraging the fragrance of the garden to waft into the house.'[53] If the world could be invited inside in this way, is it too much to ask whether those inside might be sensorially transported abroad? Perfume, then, perhaps more than form, conjured other worlds and, drifting across the threshold, made elastic tangibly domestic boundaries, transporting its subjects elsewhere in space and time.

A common feature of garden writing, both in the nineteenth century and before, was the notion that history was carried through plants and gardens into the present. Mental travelling, or Mesmerism, reached almost epic proportions in popular imaginations from the middle of the nineteenth century.[54] These ideas coloured many aspects of contemporary cultural life, especially literature. In *Oliver Twist* (1837-38), Dickens, for example, described a window around which 'were clusters of jessamine

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[51]Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature*, 1988, p. 125.

[52]*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

[53]*Ibid.*, p. 44.

[54]Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room, Women, Power and Spirituality in Late Victorian England*, (Virago, 1989); Roger Cooter, 'The History of Mesmerism in Britain: Poverty and Promise' in Heinz Schott (ed.), *Franz Anton Mesmer und die Geschichte des Mesmerismus*, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985), pp. 153-62.

and honeysuckle, that crept over the casement, and filled the place with their delicious perfume'. After an 'uncommonly sultry' day, Oliver drifts into sleep, and the boundaries between inside and outside, present and past, reality and dream become increasingly confused. 'Although our senses of touch and sight be for the time dead,' says the narrator, 'yet our sleeping thoughts, and the visionary scenes that pass before us, will be influenced [...] by the mere silent presence of some external object.'[55] Scent, the most evocative of the senses, is bound closely to memory. William Robinson was quite certain that 'the fragrant bushes of our gardens may entwine for us, apart from their gift of beauty, living associations and beautiful thoughts for ever famous in human story [sic].'[56]

6.4. 'Crystal Palaces on a Domestic Scale'.

Perhaps the institution most significant in rendering exotic gardening accessible to the public was the Crystal Palace. Initially, its influence was restricted to the staging of horticultural shows and the interest which it encouraged in glass structures. However, apart from the existing trees enclosed by the first, temporary exhibition building at Hyde Park, almost the only horticultural exhibits were mechanical. (As opposed to botanical exhibits, which were well represented.) But after its removal to the South London suburbs in 1854, the now permanent palace was established as a winter garden where geographically discrete spaces were devoted to plant cultivation both inside and outside the building. For instance, 'at the tropical end of the nave [were] the specimens of rice, and other tropical grasses, and Papyrus.'[57] 'Date palms were imported direct from Egypt, and of a size to give a character to the Egyptian antiquities with which they were associated.'[58] But visitors could see not only the

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[55]Quoted in John Sutherland, *Is Heathcliff a Murderer? Puzzles in 19th-Century Fiction*, (World's Classics, 1996), pp. 36-7. See also, Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature*, p. 39.

[56]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 292.

[57]*Floral World*, 2 (4), 1859, 76.

[58]*The Gardener*, (1867) quoted in Tom Carter, *The Victorian Garden*, (Bell & Hyman Ltd., 1984), p. 136.

variety of new and exotic tender plants which flourished there - they could see how much better common or garden plants fared under glass, protected from urban pollution. Inspired by their experiences there, amateur gardeners began to acquire what in 1857 Shirley Hibberd called their own 'crystal palaces on a domestic scale' (fig. 6.).[59] Michael Waters makes a very important and little observed point about the popularisation and importance of conservatory gardening during the second half of the nineteenth century.

> [T]he conservatory captured the Victorian imagination in much the same way and for much the same reasons as did two other Victorian institutions, one indigenous, the other appropriated, and both were applauded for their marvellous and miraculous effects: the greatest of all glass palaces, the Crystal Palace, and translations of the Arabian Nights, to which the Great Exhibition was often compared.[60]

At least one other factor contributed to the popularity of conservatory or glass house cultivation after this time, a factor which, although its influence was indirect, clearly affected all aspects of the horticultural trade: bad winters. First, the winter of 1855 when parts of the Thames froze and second, the terrible winter of 1860-61, which was particularly long and devastatingly bitter. It more than decimated London's immigrant population of trees and shrubs and ate into its native hardy varieties. Some of the most famous collections of exotics in the care of professional nurserymen and gentle amateurs were wiped out in a season. Stocks of supposedly hardy camellias and azaleas of some twenty years growth were permanently eradicated: specimens had to be re-imported for the delicate process of grafting to begin all over again. These events sharpened the mind of the horticultural press to a point where it realised that *all* plants would have a better chance of survival under glass.

This bad winter, together with the more general botanical observations made on plant culture in the Crystal Palace, was instrumental in changing garden design in the latter half of the century. Reflecting on the frozen season just passed, the *Floral World*

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[59]*National Magazine*, 1 (1), 1857, 206.

[60]Waters, *Garden in Victorian Literature*, 1988, p. 270; Waters, 'The Conservatory in Victorian Literature', *Journal of Garden History*, 2 (3), 1982, 273-84.

remarked that '[a]s many of our favourite evergreens, hitherto reputed hardy, have been seriously damaged by frost, we turn with increased interest to those that remain to us uninjured.'[61] After the 1860s there was a marked shift in favour of hardy indigenous plants, cultivated in naturalistic environments under glass as well as in the open landscape. Ferns and other cool and shade loving plants proved increasingly popular species for cultivating in conservatories and Wardian cases. These plants had the additional advantage of being freely obtainable from local bogs and woodland. When transferred to inner-suburban gardens, however, they fared much better under glass where they might also be carefully studied. Like the large elms which Paxton had enclosed in the Crystal Palace, they flourished, protected there from the filthy London atmosphere. Instead of suffering in the confined space, naturally hardy plants improved, benefiting from a clean rather than warm environment. Brent Elliott has noted that '[i]t is no accident that the most publicised conservatory of the decade following the Crystal Palace was the Temperate House at Kew.'[62] Temperate and unheated glasshouses were a domestic luxury which most middling-class gardeners might afford. Glass and timber taxes may have been relaxed but the cost of fuel for maintaining a hothouse remained within the reach only of the better-off.

Those villa-dwellers without a substantial glass house but nevertheless keen to explore tropical landscapes without encountering the teeming millions at flower shows and public parks could pass their time in the common practice of visiting the 'open houses' of the landed elite out of season. At Dangstein, the Sussex seat of the wealthy Nevill family, the vast collection of glass houses was open to the public for six days of the week from the 1860s. Here were cultivated 'economically important as well as beautiful plants [...] Peruvian wax palm grew alongside cotton plants, tea and coffee trees, sugar cane, as well as mangoes, guavas and bananas.'[63] The walls of the fern house were 'all encrusted with shells from the East Indies and on the back wall are the

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[61] *Floral World*, 4 (10), 1861, 226.

[62] Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, (Batsford, 1986), pp. 107-8.

[63] Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, *A Paradise out of a Common Field: the Pleasures and Plenty of the Victorian Garden*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), pp. 192-3.

letters L.D.N. 1872 in white coral upon red.' Thus the public as well as the Nevill family circle was offered a particular window onto the world, one which very much reflected Lord Nevill's activities overseas. Visitors might wander aimlessly 'from America into India through a glass door [...] into Bombay in the rains'[64] while pondering the very considered aims of Lord Nevill whose presence, like his initials, marked all four corners of his miniature empire. Darwin made botanising expeditions to Dangstein, and Lady Nevill exchanged plants with Kew.

It was at Kew, of course, that landscapes had first been designed with the economic importance of plants in mind. Its role in demonstrating the effects of climate upon the British constitution was also important in constructing an imaginative geography of empire. In his *Wanderings through the Conservatories at Kew* of 1857, the naturalist Philip Henry Gosse deliberately contrasted the oppressively exotic interior of the Palm House with the clement air of its English host:

> a door, and a length of a couple of yards, conducts us from the temperate to the torrid zone. Without was a pleasant, genial, English summer day, within is the damp and oppressive heat of Hindostan. Into what noble society are we now introduced?'[65]

Gosse, who usually undertook his explorations overseas, intended his *Wanderings* at Kew as a gentle introduction to the rigors of tropical atmospheres for potential missionaries and other imperial travellers.

6.5. Botanising at Home.

If even the small fashionable garden encouraged a sort of global consciousness it did not preclude the foraging for plants closer to home: in reality only a minority of men and women ventured abroad in their searches and many remained in their gardens to botanise. Instead the same 'spirit of adventure [which] brings to light botanical resources'[66] abroad was present at home, for most 'herborizers were as happy in the

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[64]*Journal of Horticulture*, (1872), quoted in Morgan and Richards, *Paradise*, 1990, p. 76.

[65]Philip H. Gosse, *Wanderings through the Conservatories at Kew*, (Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1857), p. 44.

[66]*Floral World*, 6 (11), 1863, 235.

countryside of Scotland or southern France as they were in the Amazon or Southern Africa'.[67] In 1861, one amateur gardener complained to his magazine of the few opportunities for botanising: 'after the hours of business in a great town, it is impossible to make frequent journeys to the country to gather specimens for the herbarium.' The editor must have comforted not a few of his readers in his reply:

> There is no more agreeable or more instructive method of studying botany than by growing annual plants [... which] is far more superior for all who desire full and accurate knowledge to all possible collection of wild specimens, no matter how many countries and climates may be laid under tribute.'[68]

To the non-agricultural classes, rural landscapes in Britain were considered in similar fashion to uncharted territories abroad; for many prosperous men and women this was the nearest they would get to seeing plants in their natural habitat, gardens being resolutely domesticated places. The countryside, like its supposedly unscientific, ill-educated and unruly populace, was considered wild and in need of rational, systematic order to catalogue its natural history. Philanthropists took it upon themselves to educate the rural poor; 'tourists' offering social commentary such as William Cobbett and the Loudons studied both the poor and methods of improving their domestic environments; naturalists like Richard Jefferies studied the local flora and fauna. Unlike in foreign lands, the need to categorise the flora and fauna of Britain was felt to be more pressing owing to the perceived encroachment upon the uncultivated landscape by increasingly mechanised agricultural practices. Further, the expansion of the towns and suburbs - the habitat of many middle-class naturalists - was also identified as squeezing the wildness out of the countryside.

However, contemporary anecdotes reveal attitudes to nature and its documentation which were somewhat less missionary than those expressed in the horticultural and botanical press. One naturalist described herself in 1836 as 'moss

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[67]Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 1995, p. 35.

[68]*Floral World*, 4 (3), 1861, 43.

mad';[69] twenty years later another recalled how she had 'ransacked' the beach at Ramsgate during a family holiday and pressed the plants under her mattress.[70] If amateurs did not necessarily engage with their hobby in the scientific manner proposed by prominent naturalists and botanists, they enjoyed the collecting all the same. Very soon, many writers were urging caution against the 'collecting expedition'. Shirley Hibberd complained that 'the passion for fern collecting has in many instances been carried to ridiculous excess.'[71] He berated such 'collecting expeditions,' dismissing them along with 'the picnicking, archaeologico-exploring, and holiday perambulating that may be associated with this sport.'[72] But Hibberd had encouraged the collecting of such 'hardy exotics' as ferns, and in the 1860s had recommended their cultivation with foreign sorts in a domestic greenhouse such as his own (fig. 6.5).[73] Not surprisingly, amateurs ignored conservationists' warnings, and continued to enjoy the *idea* of the collecting expedition with scant regard for botanical excellence. Even those who travelled abroad in their excursions could treat their hobby light-heartedly. Writing home from Ireland early in the century, this English tourist showed just how lightly his survey of colonial botany in suburban Dublin was undertaken:

> Monkstown 1805 10 August
> Dear Madam,
> No sooner had I left Dublin than I began to botanize, three beautiful plants did I pick up [...] To be sure I didn't know whether they were thistles or mosses, but I was sure they were peculiar to Ireland for I had never seen 'em before, and so I was [...] bringing them to you but Ben promised indeed we'll find the same weeds under any cliff in England and so I disposed of my collection at prime cost.[74]

The majority of amateur botanists never ventured into British colonies, and practised their hobby on local field trips, in the suburbs, or at home in the garden.

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[69]Quoted in Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science, Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860*, (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 182.

[70]Shteir, *Cultivating Women*, 1996, p. 217.

[71]*Floral World*, 8 (1), 1865, 12. These ideas were expanded in his *The Fern Garden* of 1869.

[72]*Ibid.*, 146.

[73]*Floral World*, 1 (new series), (1), 1866, 1.

[74]Minet Library, London, IV/4, 173, Graham-Polhill Papers.

Thus the amateur might continue to botanise for 'weeds' near home while also cultivating the new and beautiful varieties collected from overseas by more experienced plant collectors: both activities familiarised imperial notions of discovery, settlement, and civilisation, completing them by cultivating their subjects in a domestic landscape.

It was for the cultivation of the northern hemisphere's flora that attempts at verisimilitude were reserved. Almost without exception, and from their earliest introduction, horticultural writing organised the plants of the temperate zone into naturalistic landscapes suggestive of their indigenous environments. This plan was carried out with such success at one London nursery show-room in the mid-1860s that the displays were considered more impressive than 'native scenes'. The article 'Ferneries under Glass' reported that

> The best hardy fernerys of this kind I have yet seen is that at Messrs. Veitch's Exotic Nursery, King's Road Chelsea. It is simply a cool house laid out in rockeries and walks, and planted everywhere with ferns, which rise tier above tier from the floor to the roof, in a series of irregular bays, hollows, and miniature crags [...] these ferns surpass even the most beautiful groups to be met with in native scenes.[75]

Jane Loudon explained how to form 'what the landscape-gardeners call scenes'.

> There might be an American ground, formed in some shaded hollow, and planted with rhododendrons, azaleas, and kalmias [...] In another part of the pleasure-grounds there might be some Alpine scenery, with pines and firs, and particularly larches, interspersed with a few birch trees, planted on dry sandy soil, on hilly ground.

'In short,' she wrote, 'there are no limits to the numerous and beautiful scenes that might be laid out by a woman of cultivated mind, who possessed fancy and taste, combined with a very slight knowledge of trees'.[76] William Robinson hoped that 'it is also very probable that we shall, as various regions of the northern world are opened up, introduce to cultivation other fine wild species, and get precious races from them.'[77] Beautiful scenes offering views of hardy plants could also be conjured more

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[75]*Floral World*, 8 (2), 1865, 14.

[76]Jane Loudon, *Practical Instructions in Gardening for Ladies*, (John Murray, 1841; 1843 edn.), p. 340.

[77]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 334.

immediately, and required neither the latest importations of precious races nor the luxury of extensive grounds to plant them in. In the Domestic Notices of the *Gardener's Magazine* Miss Kent, author of *Flora Domestica* and a teacher of botany, was described as living 'in the very heart of London, between Paternoster Row and St. Paul's, yet she has a thriving garden of pots on top of her house; not of sickly geraniums but of pretty little hardy natives.' On the same page, Mr. Sweet's lectures were also advertised, with an accompanying editorial passage claiming that if all those 'who possess a house, and a plot in the way of a garden, in the neighbourhood of London [...] were to take six mixed lessons of botany and culture [...] they would find themselves [...] within the pale of a new world.'[78] On his retirement in 1861, Sweet's success was attributed to his having 'understood the geographical history [of plants],' as well as his 'master[y] of hybridization.' He urged amateurs to 'treat [plants] as Nature treats them at home.'[79]

However worldly were the grounds she cultivated, Jane Loudon's prospect remained essentially domestic. 'What a difference it makes,' she wrote, 'in the pleasure we have in returning home, if we have something that we know has been improving in our absence!' Further, she 'regard[ed] the trees and shrubs we have planted, and the scenes we have laid out, with almost parental fondness.'[80] All garden writers, however, concurred that the gardens immediately adjoining the house should be evidently domestic and in no way wild. 'We must,' said an amateur,

> adapt our gardens, that at least which enjoins the house, to the building, and make them a part of it, appropriate [...] we must engraft upon our own romantic harshnesses something that will accord better with the equipment of the interior of our residences, something like furniture and ornament, and not leap from our windows into jungles, and steppes, and wildernesses, where the lion and panther would be more at home than the "lady with her silken sheen."[81]

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[78] *Gardener's Magazine*, 5, 1830, 487.

[79] *Floral World*, 4 (1), 1861, 11-12.

[80] Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies*, 1843, p. 341.

[81] *Gardener's Magazine*, 3, 1828, 89.

The flower-garden withdrew from the wilder outskirts of the garden, however small and, near the house, was a perfectly domestic and civilised place.

6.6. Nurture and Nature: The Exotic at Home.

All sorts of gardening were then thought appropriate activity for women, for 'a genuine love for flowers promotes the love of home'.[82] The keeping of a good garden was, like the upkeep of the interior, evidence of an upright household. This was just as true of the 'middling sort' as it was the poor household. In 1860 the *Floral World* cited the 'increase and prosper' of floricultural societies as 'evidence of the healthiness of domestic life in England,' because 'societies for the encouragement of horticulture are by their very nature civilising.' It added, significantly, that 'gardening makes men domestic.'[83] But for all that men and women probably shared the gardening according to personal preference or the custom of their class, the culture of flowering exotics was singled out in print as a particularly suitable occupation for women and girls. 'Nurture of exotics,' commented the *Gentleman's Magazine* as early as 1801, 'not only belongs more particularly to the female province, on account of its being an elegant home amusement, but because of there being much delicate work, essential to the welfare of the plants.'[84]

In her study of curry and cookbooks in Victorian England, Susan Zlotnick documents the process of naturalising a foreign item until it is fully incorporated into native material culture. The incorporation of foreign foodstuffs into English cookery was akin to the incorporation of foreign plants into English gardens: both acts could 'naturalise' the end product which was usually considered more refined and cultivated. Zlotnick traces 'the "good" Victorian woman's moral agency and figurative power to domesticate the foreign [...] through cookbooks and curry recipes.'[85] Through this

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[82]*Journal of Horticulture*, (1872), quoted in Carter, *Victorian Garden*, p. 181.

[83]*Floral World*, 3 (5), 1860, 89-90.

[84]Quoted in Shteir, *Cultivating Women*, p. 35.

[85]Susan Zlotnick, 'Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England', *Frontiers: a Journal of Women's Studies*, 16 (2/3), 1995, 52.

process of hybridity and incorporation, she says, and 'by virtue of their own domesticity, Victorian women could neutralize the Other by naturalizing the products of foreign lands.'[86] Although it is doubtful that any Other was ever completely neutralised from foreign items within this period, due largely to the thrills potentially induced by their consumption, Zlotnick is surely right in her concluding remark that 'Indian curry belongs to the Victorian interior as much as tea and crumpets'.[87] We can draw parallels with countless foreign plants incorporated into the Victorian exterior, many of which have since been subsumed into the so-called 'English' garden. But her premise that curry's 'belonging points to ways in which the Victorians understood India to be theirs' does not explain the quantities of plants 'belonging' to the Victorian garden with origins beyond the British Empire. Neither does it help us to understand why some belonged, like tea and camellias, even as their consumption continued to be exoticised. Rather, exotic introductions reflected a fascination with the generalised difference of places 'abroad' regardless of whether they belonged to the mother country. Deborah Ryan has argued that 'many people experienced the Empire through the cooking and consumption of imported foodstuffs,'[88] and it is reasonable to suppose that empire goods were generally more familiar to consumers than entirely foreign items. But a familiar plant - or foodstuff - is not necessarily a naturalised one. Thus, as Ryan reminds us, the 'latent English taste for the spiced and half-foreign which was a driving motive of imperialism,'[89] ensured that foreign material culture was subsumed into its new home without altogether losing its original flavour. Exotics should not predominate in the kitchen or the garden. Rather, a member of 'the town-dwelling middle class [...] might blend with the beauties of his own land some of the more striking productions of tropical regions.'[90]

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[86]*Ibid.*, 53.

[87]*Ibid.*, 64.

[88]Deborah S. Ryan, 'The *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition and Suburban Modernity, 1908-1951', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of East London, 1995), p. 199.

[89]J. Morris quoted in D. S. Ryan, *Thesis*, p. 188.

[90]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 153.

In the last third of the nineteenth century it became common for horticultural writers to praise British flora over exotic introductions. Hibberd hoped that 'many a garden will have its raised bank devoted to these simple children of our native wilds, whose traditional histories sanctify them in our memory as associates in many of the greatest scenes of our history.'[91] Further, the 'interesting, literary, and domestic associations' of native species, would 'rival successfully the showy borders where exotics have their proper home.'[92] In the closing decades of the century, examples of old-English gardens began to appear, in print and on the ground; even Shakespearean gardens complete with contemporary flora were created. Although most gardeners did not go to such lengths, many were influenced by the quantities of literature published advocating the 'old-fashioned' approach to garden design and planting. That this was a new form of the old appears to have mattered little. Perhaps it offered relief from increasingly scientised horticultural practice, perhaps it offered simplicity and familiarity after years of unstinting saturation by the 'new'. Perhaps a little less certainty in the strength of British imperial identity led to uncertainty as to the nature of the English garden. Whatever the reasons for this redefinition, and it may be that all these factors played their part, gardeners were increasingly preferring native or *native-looking* flora over the exotic. In Barbara Campbell's *Garden of a Commuter's Wife* of 1911, 'the thrill of oriental suggestion that the lily and iris tribes always bring with them' was tempered: 'In an old-fashioned garden such as mine, this result must be by suggestion only; for if it is allowed to dominate, it becomes incongruous, and would wholly denationalise the garden.'[93]

One way of compromising between the taste for alien exotics and that for native hardy plants was to opt for hardy exotics emanating from the northern hemisphere, especially American plants. So-called American gardens were popular throughout the nineteenth century, appearing in contemporary fiction as well as didactic texts. Edward

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[91] *Ibid.*, p. 413.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 414.

[93] Quoted in D. Kellaway, (ed.), *Women Gardeners*, (Virago, 1995), p. 68.

Kemp's *How to Lay out a Small Garden* (1850), recommended that 'a garden might be tolerably well furnished with the tribe known as "American plants," with a very little aid from other quarters'.[94] Shirley Hibberd's remark in an 1871 chapter on the American Garden gives us an idea of their popularity, even though he was complaining about their most important species, or 'perishing rhododendrons', being planted in alkaline soil.

> The money spent on rhododendrons during twenty years in this country would nearly suffice to pay off the National Debt. If the reader fails to apprehend the force of this remark, its meaning may be reached through an inspection of all the villa gardens in the country.[95]

These generally hardy exotics seem to have inspired imaginative travels in much the same fashion as did those from torrid zones. In George Eliot's *DanielDeronda* (1874-76), a novel bristling with issues of belonging and origins, 'a knoll planted with American shrubs' operated as both a space for physical escape (however momentarily) and for imaginative travelling beyond the immediate environment. On this spot, the main female character, Gwendolen, ponders on the nature of women's lives and inverts the usual comparison of women with flowers. It is notable that her thoughts of transplantation should occur among the rhododendrons and acacias.

> We women can't go in search of adventures - to find out the North-West Passage or the Source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants; they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous.[96]

Gosse's *Wanderings Through the Conservatories at Kew* (1857), on the other hand, believed that exploring the exotics under the canopy of the Palm House was second only to discovering the real thing: it was a preparation for escape. Published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, this illustrated book was aimed in part at preparing would-be missionaries for the climate and topography of the Tropics. 'We

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[94]Kemp, *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 77.

[95]Shirley Hibberd, *The Amateur's Flower Garden*, (Groombridge & Sons, 1871), p. 216.

[96]George Eliot, *DanielDeronda*, (1874-76; Wordsworth, 1996), pp. 109-110.

can,' wrote Gosse, 'form some approximation to an idea of tropical scenery, far more correct at least than any number of volumes could convey; and of it may, in a subordinate degree, learn what is true of a personal acquaintance with equatorial regions.'[97] Further, the bodily experience of the Palm House would reacquaint the returned traveller with the forgotten environment in a way which literature alone never could.

> Those who have enjoyed opportunities of seeing the glories of tropical scenery [...] have the gorgeous sights vividly recalled as they lean over this gallery, especially if they are so fortunate as to be present in the absence of other visitors, when a stillness and solitude prevail somewhat like those of the virgin forest. And those who have never been out of Europe may form a conception of those lands of the sun from what they see here.[98]

But the bodily experience was not only physically atmospherical. 'The beholder [who] looks down on a fair representation of a real tropical forest' could expect to have his other senses aroused. He would enjoy 'the unwonted forms, the various tints of verdure, the luxuriant growths, the peculiar odours, the steamy breathings, from thousands of strange shrubs and trees gathered from east and west, the very elite of the vegetable kingdom.'[99] In this way the missionary could acclimatise to the position in which he would eventually settle in the real tropical environment.

The seeming naturalness of the way shrubby plants were allowed to grow without glass or other structural interference at the periphery of a garden was often eroticised in the same fashion as exotic growth in the conservatory. These distant spots had the added advantage of having little or no architectural presence to detract from the wildness of the scene. Hence, something of an other worldly experience could be gained without the expense of laying on tropical heat and humidity, even, perhaps in an ordinary garden. Under the heading Specimens and Thickets, Kemp's *How to Lay out a Small Garden* certainly seemed to think this possible. Kemp's voluptuous language closely resembled that in Gosse's *Wanderings*.

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[97]Gosse, *Wanderings Through the Conservatories at Kew*, 1857, p. 143.

[98]*Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

[99]*Ibid.*, p. 46.

> The most beautiful combinations and the most exquisite variety will result from letting a few plants of different heights and characters grow together in some parts, as they do in a state of nature; where bushes and trees often mingle their forms, and are linked in closer union by the tangling clematis, or lusty briar, or more luxuriant bramble.[100]

Recalling George Eliot's comments upon women's social position, plants and transplantation, Walter Wright's *Alpine Flowers and Rock Gardens* (1910), recommended the transplantation of plants as a means of psychically transporting the body to other fecund, but undomestic, landscapes. Pottering at home in his suburban rock or Alpine garden, Wright implied, the returned traveller could recall the memory of, if not almost physically sense, the lush slopes of the mountain, by fondling the transplanted plants and their offspring:

> The enthusiastic rock gardener [...] is generally one who has made the acquaintance of some of his favourites in their native haunts; and the sight of them as they come into bloom arouses memories of the day among the mountains when he saw them for the first time in all the glory of their wild beauty.[101]

Small wonder, then, that Gissing conceived a cliff-edge botanical exploration in 'the peaceful loveliness' of rural Devon for his scene of consummate fornication in *In the Year of the Jubilee*.[102]

From the isolated collections and single specimen exotics favoured in the first part of the century to their familiarisation, domestication and naturalisation with indigenous flora in the latter, we can trace the gradual and uneven process of how foreign plants were accommodated by British gardens. Continuing a pattern discernible from the earliest moments of horticulture, the first part of the nineteenth century saw gardens and their printed representations in which 'foreignness' or Otherness was prized. Rare and strange-looking plants were labelled and laid out in gardens as objects of wonder. Later, as the number of plants increased (and correspondingly prices decreased), and when exotics no longer appeared quite so magnificently primitive, came the call for assimilation of those plants hardy enough for the temperate zone and

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[100]Kemp, *How to Lay out a Small Garden*, 1850, p. 129.

[101]Walter P. Wright, *Alpine Flowers and Rock Gardens*, (Headley Brothers, 1910), p. 12.

[102]George Gissing, *In the Year of the Jubilee*, (1894; Wordsworth Editions, 1994), pp. 101-103.

the removal of all those that could survive only under glass. 'It is reasonable to suppose,' wrote Robinson, 'that some of [...] these lovely flowers that tumble into our lap, as it were, from the woods and hills of Western China, Japan, and California [...] would take care of themselves, if trusted to likely spots, with us.'[103] Naturalisation also occurred accidentally. Even very soon after introduction, a previously exotic plant could become so familiar that it bred freely and without comment. After a few more years it could be subsumed with innumerable others of foreign extraction into that ever dubious category, 'The English Garden'.

Between 1860 and '70, as a taste for excitingly unfamiliar plants in their ideal landscapes filtered down to those who planted small gardens and smaller glasshouses, the few protests by journalists at the time wasted upon tender exotics in British gardens swelled to an audible defence of indigenous species. Although this was partly as a result of the extravagance of commercial displays, the grand public conservatories lost none of their global vision, especially in conjunction with organised imperial events like the International and the Colonial and Indian Exhibitions staged at South Kensington in 1862 and 1886, respectively. But exotic landscapes now had rivals for space and attention in newly fashionable fern and Alpine gardens, where hardy plants - some classed as exotic and some pointedly indigenous - from temperate climes grew in more or less geologically authentic terrain. In the last third of the century, ideas about naturalising plants gained ground with renewed interest in the cottage and old-fashioned gardens of England. At just the moment when the English garden began preferring native or native-looking flora over tender exotics, other British cultural practices had become similarly nationalistic, creating for themselves an identity rooted in the stability of the past. Blatant displays of imperial spoils now had little place within the house and garden, being reserved for the pomp and ceremony of public events which, as John Mackenzie notes, 'came to have a predominantly imperial flavour in the 1880s, precisely the decade of the new aggressive imperialism.'[104] But the domestic garden

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[103]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 98.

[104]MacKenzie, *Propaganda*, p. 97.

retained its imperial legacy: instead of triumphantly exhibiting its specimen exotics, horticulture increasingly subsumed the individual identities of plants, reworking them into a familiar but not altogether indigenous 'English garden'. Here was a domesticated imperialism which recognised but underplayed its cultural hybridity.

Naturalisation of exotics was not a rejection of botanical imperialism, then, it was its logical culmination. Exotics were naturalised alongside native varieties with the result that they became indistinguishable. British science had trained them to be hardy and useful. But if the imperial project had now been rendered invisible in the garden itself, its success continued to be celebrated in pictorial representations. In spite of their exotic names, rhododendrons and other imported species, had now become so established a feature of the English landscape as to appear utterly native. Accompanied by that favourite imperial figure, the gentleman explorer, illustrations of naturalised exotics left the reader in no doubt of their origins, ensuring that something of their exotic association would remain (fig. 6.7).

However large or small one's garden, then, those few plants it contained called up images and associations far beyond what their present form might suggest. As Hibberd noted, 'our chief pleasures and many of our pains, arise out of associations,' so that, 'though we cannot have the mountain dells, and creeping thorns, and purple knolls of wild thyme, we may have emblems of them in our little mural paradise.'[105] Cultivating exotics in British gardens was a way of familiarising unknown tropical landscapes which, for most people, would remain otherwise distant, hazy places only palpable through travellers' representations. In this way stay-at-home domestic types could travel imaginatively in foreign landscapes simply by walking in their gardens. Indeed it may be that tending one's own plantation of foreign species at home was a kind of surrogacy for more adventurous designs abroad. Although expatriates did return with seeds and stories which fuelled the passion for exotic gardening, their travels were never a prerequisite for the culture of exotics at home. Many of Britain's exotic gardeners never left its shores. Instead they explored the landscapes in miniature

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[105]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 427.

displayed in the spectacular conservatories that were such a feature of Victorian urban life. And so although most were unable 'to plan a garden on such a scale [...] the idea of such an arrangement [could] be carried out in a small plot of a hundred feet square,'[106] without its makers ever having to leave home because, as Robert Louis Stephenson noted, 'inside the garden we can construct a country of our own.'[107]

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[106]*Ibid.*, p. 338.

[107]Robert Louis Stephenson, *Essays of Travel*, (1879; Chatto & Windus, 1918), p. 187.

7. Horticultural Nationalism and New Old-English Garden.

> If you have any love for your native land - any warmness of heart for its grey woods and green slopes - its rustic and its Saxon freedom - just set apart the finest case you have for a collection of British wildlings.
> (Shirley Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, 1857).

Horticultural nationalism in its most triumphally patriotic form seems rarely to have been found in private gardens. Rather, it took root in public arenas designed explicitly for the display of national and imperial might and munificence. As the centrepiece to the Imperial Archive at South Kensington, the gardens designed by William Andrews Nesfield for the Royal Horticultural Society provided the perfect theatre for the expression of national pride and prejudice in seemingly natural form. The 'Anglo-Italian' style of gardening developed by Nesfield and his frequent design partner Sir Charles Barry, architect of the Palace of Westminster, hinted at classical antiquity as well as Italian sophistication; designers were attempting to prove that the Villa d'Este had been the principal influence upon the English Mediaeval garden.[1] Barry had surveyed continental gardens on a tour of Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, and his preference for the designs of aristocratic Italy casually avoided the use of French gardens like Versailles as models for English 'formal' garden design. The Society was a relative late-comer to the scene, acquiring both the site and its Royal Charter less than a year before the opening of the International Exhibition of 1862 (figs. 3.3-3.5). Although Albert, the Society's President, died before the Gardens' official opening, Victoria undertook to act as absent Patron in her late husband's stead. Royal patronage was important to the development and popularisation of gardening as the national pastime in several related ways. Quite apart from Albert's association and friendships with some of the greatest gardeners of the period, his own passion for horticulture and supervision of the garden layout at South Kensington were followed with interest in the country. Both Victoria and Albert also gardened privately at Osborne House, their English family home on the Isle of Wight, where each of their children was granted a plot and encouraged to tend it accordingly.

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[1] Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, (Batsford, 1986), p. 77.

But even the elaborate gardens at Osborne, reproduced in the gardening press and appearing as backgrounds to family portraits, paled in comparison with the grounds at South Kensington in terms of ostentatious horticultural nationalism. The *Floral World* anticipated that 'We shall have at Kensington Gore an example of the application of high art principles, and a very complete amalgamation of the French, Italian, and English schools' because, in this brick-bounded site, 'landscape effects are out of the question.'[2] At the heart of the rectangular garden, which sported tanks for 'hardy aquatic plants, banks of ferns, American plants and large masses of shrubs and groups of tall trees', was a square divided equally into four triangles separated by turf. 'The triangles are elaborate examples of scroll-work, in which may be traced out, without difficulty, even now, the outlines of the Rose, Shamrock, Thistle, and Leek.'[3] Rather than incorporating bedding plants, these national floral symbols were filled with coloured gravels ground from Derbyshire Spar, Blue John, Welsh slate, and pounded red and yellow bricks.[4] Here was a central, British focus for the Royal Horticultural Society's Italian, French, and American influenced show grounds.

The imperial site was also increasingly associated with botany, even as the gardens were accused of an over-dependence upon non-plant materials. In 1866 a Botanical Congress was held at the Raphael Rooms of the South Kensington Museum, over the Exhibition Road from the Exhibition and Gardens, and afterwards in the Sheepshanks Gallery. The President, the famous French botanist Alphonse de Candolle, gave a wide-ranging address treating 'first, of the advantages of Horticulture to Botany; second, the advantages of Botany to Horticulture; and third, the beneficial effects of the association of Botany with Horticulture.'[5]

It is unlikely that the gardening public attempted 'South Kensington' floral nationalism at home, and not only because, as Shirley Hibberd pointedly remarked, 'the majority of people do not keep themselves sufficiently under control when tempted

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[2]*Floral World*, 4 (6), 1861, 125.

[3]See *Ibid.*, 126; and *Gossip for the Garden*, 7 (February), 1862, 52.

[4]Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, (1960; Penguin, 1985), p. 310.

[5]*Floral World*, 1 (new series), (6), 1866, 213.

to indulge a smile as they admire it.'[6] As we have seen, if any sign of horticultural patriotism can be read from the majority of contemporary gardens it was usually in the subtle ways in which plants were arranged or improved, and in the notion that gardening itself contributed to the national purse and character. Hence most gardener-writers conceded that gardening in poor taste was better than not gardening at all: '"every one to his taste" is a motto that very well suits a land of liberty and a nation of gardeners'.[7]

In many ways the gardens at Kensington Gore, like those at the Sydenham Crystal Palace, marked a watershed in the history of nineteenth-century garden design and culture. Most garden historians agree that at or about 1870 the model of national garden design had became increasingly an 'English' one. Aided by the growing popularity of artists' impressions of cottage and small country-house gardens in watercolour, and the proliferation of similar images in poetry and prose, the idea of the so-called English garden, or what I have called the new old-English garden, had become a powerfully symbolic and pervasive presence in late nineteenth-century print culture. This new old-English garden was variously derived from idealised old-fashioned, old-world and cottage gardens, and its evocative appeal was due in large measure to increased animosity towards exotics, bedding, and other 'unnatural' plants and their modes of cultivation. Collaborations by artists and writers advocating this English garden between *c.* 1870 and the First World War ensured its continued visibility, appearing everywhere from technical gardening books and seed-packets to greetings-cards and crockery.[8]

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[6]Shirley Hibberd, *The Amateur's Flower Garden*, (Groombridge & Sons, 1871), p. 16.

[7]Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower Garden*, 1871, p. 64.

[8]To cite just a few examples, William Robinson's *The Wild Garden* (1871) was illustrated by Alfred Parsons; Arthur Paterson's *The Homes of Tennyson* (1905) was illustrated by his sister Helen Allingham; The artist G. S. Elgood collaborated with Gertrude Jekyll on *Some English Gardens* (1907); Editor of Robinson's *The Garden*, Jekyll's colleague E. T. Cook's *Gardens of England* (1908) was illustrated by Beatrice Parsons; and Ellen Willmott's *Genus Rosa* (1914) by Alfred Parsons. Reproductions of Beatrice Parsons' and Lilian Stannard's paintings appeared as frontispieces to Walter P. Wright's early 19th-century popular gardening books and Parsons' were printed on packets of

Chapter Seven examines the complex history of how and why there was a concerted attempt to encourage the cultivation of a particular form of 'Englishness' in both domestic and public gardens between about 1870 and the end of our period in 1914. It introduces the various political and ideological factors which coalesced to form the conceptual underpinning of this new old-English garden movement, even though, as we shall see, most of these factors were reactionary and frequently theoretically inconsistent, not to say incoherent. Nevertheless the subject's emotiveness and supposed national bearing ensured that thousands of column inches were devoted to the arguments, their proponents (most of whom will be familiar from previous chapters), and to literary and pictorial representations of idealised 'English gardens', themselves.

Next, the economy of the new old-English garden is examined. Cottagey mixtures of vegetables and simple flowers were increasingly recommended for all sorts of gardens, rich and poor, on the grounds that they were inexpensive as well as traditional. These were heralded as the morally correct alternative to exotic and expensive plants in the garden, the latter being emblems of *arrivistes* suburban and cottager classes whose presence, like their plants, further disrupted the harmony of the already precariously situated rural English landscape.

The third part of the chapter looks at the cult of the amateur, always a Victorian phenomenon, in the late nineteenth-century garden. Despite the fact that the most prominent horticultural journalists, particularly Gertrude Jekyll, ran nurseries and undertook regular garden-design commissions, there was a strong emphasis in the press upon the superior aesthetic taste of the amateur gardener. Professionally-trained gardeners were, by implication, lower class, mechanistic, insensitive to the 'genius of the place' and overly impressed by the sorts of modern horticultural technology which preferred innovation, immediate gratification, and overall effect at the expense of

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Sutton's Seeds. Such images also, importantly, featured strongly in children's literature. The cottage gardens of the artist and botanist Beatrix Potter, and the old-English gardens of Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane were three of the best-known producers of these images.

subtlety, detail, and 'natural intuitiveness'. Thus professional gardeners were held largely responsible for the 'depraved' style of gardening, being heavily dependent upon masses of tender exotic species, reproduced from regular cuttings, and planted out seasonally in elaborate patterns. Bedding plants stood for all that was repulsive to the 'true' English gardener. Everything about bedders - their colour, layout, breeding and procreation - was 'unnatural'. Industrial production, warned traditionalists, was infiltrating the English domestic garden.

The role of scent in the English garden links directly with the previous section's discussion of the superior sensory perceptions of the amateur. Scent and discussions of its qualities followed an uneasy and rarely convincing path which granted one or other group of scented plants as 'innocent' and English, and another as overblown and foreign. We look at how these awkward positions were negotiated and at the same time at how the introduction of exotic plants in the English garden was increasingly explained in the languages of military and state-craft. Exotics were 'ambassadors' to their homelands. They were not made English as they had previously been, through drilling in rows and lines but selectively assimilated into the English garden according to their ability to withstand its temperate climate. We also briefly consider how the rose was a focus for horticultural jingoism at the end of the nineteenth century, continuing a post-Napoleonic War tradition of intercontinental rivalry on the subject of 'England's national flower, and Flora's choicest gem'.[9]

The penultimate section of the chapter explores the different levels of technological innovation invested in the contemporary garden by the horticultural trade, and looks at how these were interpreted as corrupting and enervating by those whose perception of gardens was guided by more 'artistic sensibilities'. We see how these arguments were part of the broader Arts and Crafts movement, emphasising the equation between honesty in materials and labour, to beauty, of which hybrid, exotic bedders with their peculiar methods of enforced reproduction, had none. In a last twist we see how these arguments were cleverly appropriated by the seed trade to explain its

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[9]*Floral World*, 6 (11), 1863, 240.

reinvigoration of English strains, after years of debilitation for artifice's sake by nurserymen and head gardeners, to safeguard the old-English garden for the future.

Finally, this chapter on new old-English garden considers the models of Englishness from which it was constructed. Where the previous discussion of technology dealt with non-visible Englishness in the garden, (i.e. its vigorously-rooted tradition, good breeding, and liberty to seed freely in the temperate English landscape, etc.), this concluding part shows how *fin de siecle* historicism was influencing the design and culture of both private and public gardens as well as domestic architecture and exhibition design.[10] Revivalist gardens began with the creation of Shakespearean gardens, first created from the flowers mentioned in the plays on a notionally Elizabethan and Jacobean model. Soon, Shakespearean gardens were joined by more general 'Tudor borders', and a general acknowledgement that the model from which the new old-English garden was taking its lead was that created during the first English Renaissance.

7.1. Cultivating the National Domestic Garden Style

In 1906, a London exhibition of the watercolourist Lilian Stannard, a favourite of the Princess of Wales, was reviewed in *The Observer* by a critic who defied 'any lover of an old-fashioned English garden to see these drawings without real delight'. His description moved easily from the image of the ideal English garden to its imagined reality. This 'reality', he realised, was all the more powerful for appealing to the home thoughts of the Englishman abroad:

> There is a peace, a repose, almost a fragrance about each and all of them [...] look at the unlaboured way in which the beautiful result is reached; turn anywhere, and see the foxgloves, the delphiniums, the stately hollyhocks, the tender greens, the sunny atmosphere, and then you will not wonder that men struggle for forty years in any

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[10]See Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas, The* Expositions Universelles, *Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 122.

> part of the world so as to come home at last and die in a house set in an old English garden.[11]

The new old-English garden was promoted most extensively by William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll. This vague category of garden variously included natural, hardy herbaceous, and wild gardens because of the informal manner in which the plants were, or appeared to be, allowed to grow without intervention from the gardener; in the new domestic terminology they were 'labour saving'. The category was made only marginally clearer when explained by the gardener-writers who popularised it. What the following descriptions share, however, is a focus upon a garden's *plants* and *planting* rather than its design; or rather, horticulture itself informed the overall design rather than being the handmaiden to the newly elevated sphere of 'landscape architecture'. The 'Cottage Garden', noted Shirley Hibberd in 1865, contained the 'finest hardy herbaceous border flowers [...] Generally speaking, they propagate themselves, so that once obtained, they spread, and may be divided every season; then the majority are not at all particular about soil.' (fig. 7.1).[12] William Robinson's *English Flower Garden* (1883) explained that 'the term "wild garden"', included uncultivated native species, but was also 'applied to the placing of perfectly hardy exotic plants in places where they will take care of themselves.'[13] Gertrude Jekyll's definition of 'the word "herbaceous"', to describe the type of plants with which she is most associated, was more scientific. She explained in simple terms for her readers of *Home and Garden* (1900) that it was

> a term in botany meaning that a plant has a perennial root and annual top. As there are herbaceous plants in all parts of the world, many not hardy with us, it is simpler and at the same time more accurate to say hardy plants, or hardy perennials if we wish to exclude the mention of annuals.[14]

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[11]In Andrew Clayton-Payne with Brent Elliott, *Victorian Flower Gardens*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), p. 94.

[12]*Floral World*, 8 (5), 1865, 103.

[13]William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, (John Murray, 1883; 1899 edn.), p. 155.

[14]Gertrude Jekyll, *Home and Garden*, (Longmans Green and Co., 1900), pp. 208-9.

This, largely amateur, group of men and women gardeners, sometimes called the new landscape gardening school, was opposed at the time by a group of professionally-trained male architects who believed that garden design should be dictated by the house and laid out by the architect, leaving the gardener to fill in the spaces. Their views, like those of Robinson and Jekyll, were promoted mainly through illustrated publications, such as J. D. Sedding's *Garden Craft Old and New* (1891), Reginald Blomfield's *The Formal Garden in England* (1892), and Thomas Mawson's *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* (1899). Naturally enough, their approach was rejected by artistic, plant-loving, gardeners, principally and most poisonously by William Robinson, and to a lesser and more conciliatory extent by the likes of 'EVB' (Eleanor Vere Boyle), Mrs. Earle, Canon Ellacombe, the Reverend Dean Hole, Frances Jane Hope, Gertrude Jekyll and Ellen Willmott. The architects' books, however, also pleaded for old-fashioned, indigenous flowers in the garden, while the planting-gardeners arranged their gardens around the geometric and sculptural elements of the revivalist old-world gardens such as formal walled beds, terracing, topiary, sundials and statuary.

This story has been told many times before; suffice to say, the ideological divisions are, in retrospect, more apparent in the prosylitism than in the gardens themselves. As Brent Elliott has noted of Blomfield's *The Formal Garden in England*, 'it was a brilliant piece of rhetoric based on sustained misrepresentation. Distortions and non-sequiturs abounded.' It was thus an easy target for the scornful Robinson.[15] Likewise, Robinson's theoretical inconsistencies were a gift to Blomfield. To present-day eyes these gardens appear very much of a kind, and were in fact rooted in the same desire to cultivate a new order of gardening to replace the bedding and formally arranged evergreens of the high Victorian period (figs. 7.2-7.3 and 7.4).

The battle of words between the proponents of these horticultural extremes, bedding and herbaceous plants, became something of a joke between Shirley Hibberd and his readers, probably because he was tired of the diatribe against bedding recently penned by Robinson for Hibberd's *Floral World* in the mid 1860s. In order to protect

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[15]Brent Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, (Batsford, 1986), pp. 226-227.

his readers' interests in both sorts of gardening, Hibberd reminded them that 'sometimes the representatives of the two classes come to high words'. In the summer of 1865 he suggested provocatively that

> Readers of horticultural journals must be much amused sometimes at the various aspects of the conflict which has been carried on for many years past between the partisans of the old fashioned herbaceous border plants and the partisans of the new race of "bedding plants".[16]

He rightly pointed to the fact that '[i]n one page of a journal they see all the bedders denounced as "rubbish," in the next page, perhaps, there are elaborate essays on combinations of colour.'[17] 'Let us have both,' he demanded, 'and let us have both in plenty'.[18] Like most journalism not absolutely repulsed by bedding, however, the *Floral World* not only traced a conciliatory path between the opposing opinions, it also switched allegiance, contradicted itself and generally confused the issue. The magazine would admit 'that bedding plants are eminently adapted for London gardens' even when it disapproved of their use.[19] 'The bedding system' was, it decided, 'carried out to extravagant limits in nearly all the private gardens of the metropolis':[20]

> I can enjoy the endless repetition of scarlet and yellow and blue, and blue and yellow and scarlet at the Crystal Palace, Regent's Park, [RHS] Kensington, and other places planned for the excitement of holidays, but I get weary of it in private gardens, and I see plainly that their possessors barter away solid and substantial pleasures for a momentary glitter.[21]

True to form, this passage was succeeded by a report on 'Bedders of the Season' by way of summing up the September issue of the magazine.[22] Although Hibberd regretted the confusion caused by lack of clarity among amateur gardeners, it may well be that amidst this 'confusion' readers felt free to garden exactly as they pleased. If those who were qualified to judge upon such matters could not agree as to horticultural

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[16]*Floral World*, 8 (6), 1865, 115.

[17]*Ibid.*

[18]*Ibid.*, 116.

[19]*Floral World*, 5 (9), 1862, 186.

[20]*Ibid.*, 198.

[21]*Ibid.*, 197-198.

[22]*Ibid.*, 201.

'appropriateness' in a given situation why on earth should the amateur worry that his garden was of the 'correct' taste?

Between 1870s and her death in 1935 Gertrude Jekyll would attempt to pour oil on the water of this horticultural cauldron even though, as her biographer Sally Festing remarks, 'it was a little difficult for her readers to understand Gertrude's refusal to take sides in various ideological factions that split the horticultural world.'[23] Although she would never have advocated bedding 'in plenty' Jekyll appreciated both points of view and she said so. As Festing acknowledges, this made her 'a perfect editor.'[24] Walter H. Godfrey's *Gardens in the Making* (1914), was a belated plea for compromise between gardeners and architects in the laying out of home grounds. Godfrey began by repeating what, by this date, had become almost a statement of fact, that 'the garden should form almost as much the environment of our home life as the house itself.' He had rather more sympathy with architects, however, and persisted in seeing the only alternative to 'the wild garden and the "wilderness"' being either 'Victorian taste' (by this date a derisory term for bedding-out schemes), or, which he preferred, 'the effect of rational planning in those fine old gardens, chiefly of the seventeenth century, that have reached such glorious maturity'.[25]

Garden historians have usually posited Robinson's *The Wild Garden* of 1871 as the first publication to offer a comprehensive, positive alternative to the bedding system. Many reasons have been postulated for this change but it is worth remembering that contemporary advocates of the new old-English garden championed their cause as much through the press as the gardens they made. Thus we find that the louder the championing of change (with its concomitant rejection of the present order), the more firmly-rooted was the likely order of things which the modernisers sought to replace. Of course, some gardeners may have appropriated the changes entirely, especially those with large plots, but most seem to have done so piecemeal - or not at

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[23]Sally Festing, *Gertrude Jekyll*, (Viking, 1991), p. 151.

[24]Festing, *Jekyll*, 1991, p. 150.

[25]Walter H. Godfrey, *Gardens in the Making*, (Batsford, 1914), pp. 5, 4.

all, if we are to believe some contemporary comment. Small suburban gardens were not the ideal spaces for appropriating the changes propounded in the press; besides, they were needed for the newly fashionable games of tennis, croquet, and petty golf, as well as the mundane things like drying grounds and waste disposal. Books recommending the new old-English garden did cater for this small-garden audience, but the high quality of most of these publications put them beyond the reach of the owners of the gardens they illustrated. *The Story of My Old World Garden and How I Made it in a London Suburb* (1910), for example, was in large folio edition, printed on art-quality paper, and copiously illustrated with fine reproductions of the author's photographs and paintings. It was a calendar of operations within a garden measuring 55 feet x 45 feet behind an 'Atelier' in West Hampstead's Kidderpore Avenue. It is unlikely that the author succeeded in his appeal to the gardeners of

> a few square yards of smoky, uneven grass, a circular bed in the centre, with three straight beds on either side, and narrow gravel paths starting from the kitchen door, skirting round the three boundaries, and returning to the same place[26]

which he had seen from the train. Thus, although Swinstead asks, 'why not have this little old-world garden on your suburban plot?'[27], it is probable that most such gardeners never saw such a book, never mind followed its directions. Those cheap, portable gardening books intended for the budget market offered plans and advice for all the main garden components, including bedding, hedges, herbaceous border, lawn, paths, pond, rockery, rose-garden, rustic summer-house and seat, shrubbery and wild garden. These tended to be listed alphabetically, not only for ease of reference, but so as not to imply that one garden type took precedence over another.

While many gardeners embraced some of the components of the new old-English garden (herbaceous borders, old-fashioned flowers, a more relaxed approach to planting in general), as many retained favourite elements of the old (rockeries, shrubberies, standard trees), but especially summer-bedding schemes, no matter how

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[26]G. Hillyard Swinstead, *The Story of My Old World Garden and How I Made it in a London Suburb*, (Baines and Scarsbrook, 1910), p. 2.

[27]Swinstead, *Old World Garden*, 1910, p. 4.

small their scale - the epitome of all that the new school revolted against. *Memories of Gardens* (1908) offered a sympathetic description of the hardening-off process of plants for bedding out and of their appearance at the height of the season.

> [T]he transformation scene, the event of the year to the anxious gardener, when with the passing of the night frosts the geraniums go from the frames to the potting shed and thence to form those bright flower-beds which modestly emulate the resplendent displays of the parks and the Crystal Palace.[28]

When each plant came into flower, the beds became a mass of blazing

> scarlets and pinks, suggesting the glories of summer toilettes: then there are the variegated tints with flowers that are faintly odiferous, and behind are the trained growths standing out waist-high like the standard roses against the green background of the laurels.[29]

The Everyman's *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* edited by Walter P. Wright in 1911 gave a less favourable summary review of carpet bedding.

> This is the most formal of all systems, because the plants used are low growers with coloured leaves, arranged in bands and panels, and restricted by regular cropping with finger and thumb throughout the summer. It enjoys no favour, and may be considered obsolete, although used occasionally in the public parks to stimulate the curiosity of the cruder elements of the community.[30]

The simplest reasons given for this shift in taste is the rejection of one generation's taste by its successor on the grounds that extravagant or ostentatious gardening (in colour, design, labour and cost) had run its 'gaudy' course. Indeed, contemporary analysis reasoned that gardening based on elaborate bedding schemes had peaked (the Crystal Palace School of Gardening was usually cited in evidence here) and was favoured only by 'the cruder elements of the community'. William Robinson had long complained that overblown public floral displays were corrupting the small, suburban, villa garden, and it was this latter garden, according to the Robinsonian school of garden journalism, which had suffered most from its owner's attempts at recreating the characteristics of public space on a domestic scale in the private home.

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[28]Alexander Innes Shand, *Memories of Gardens*, (West Strand Publishing Company, 1908), p. 10.

[29]Shand, *Memories of Gardens*, 1908, p. 11.

[30]Walter P. Wright, (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, (Everyman's Library, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1911), p. 123.

More temperate criticism held that this method of gardening had its place in public parks and gardens but was inappropriate in suburban and town gardens. Unless, that is, the gardens were on the scale of public grounds.

The open or lawn areas of both public and private grounds were treated in similar manner from mid-century, partly because they were supervised by the same or comparably-trained members of the horticultural trade reproducing everywhere the same bedded-out displays amidst close-cropped turf. More and more aristocratic estates (including Kew Gardens) were allowing some public access in the second half of the century and the fact that the layout of these gardens followed the same trends as the newly laid out public parks built for the benefit of the urban poor cannot have gone unremarked. Victoria Park in the north-east London suburb of Hackney, its sister park Battersea to the south west, or the newly enclosed commons like Kennington Park to the south, competed in design and lavishness with the displays in Hyde Park, Regent's Park, Kew Gardens, Crystal Palace and the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at South Kensington. Pictures of the larger private gardens were presented to the public in the national and gardening presses alongside those of the trade and the municipal authorities. The distinction between the displays of the larger private gardens and public parks had become so finely tuned as to cause alarm among those commentators used to judging social class and character from the landscape. Hibberd had cautioned his readers against copying the public displays at home: 'Many a grand effect that astonishes and delights the spectator when visiting Kew or Sydenham or the west end parks, would be a waste of plants and an abortion of taste, if adopted in his own limited garden.'[31] Although he allowed that there was a place for 'the magnificent displays of bedding plants in our public parks and gardens' he saw as their consequence 'an idea which [...] regards private gardens as exhibition grounds and tender plants of the geranium, verbena, and petunia type as their only proper occupants.'[32] He reiterated the now familiar lament that 'the stereotyped repetition of scarlet geraniums, and yellow

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[31] *Floral World*, 4 (5), 1861, 92.

[32] Shirley Hibberd, *The Amateur's Flower Garden*, (Groombridge & Sons, 1871), p. 4.

calceolarias is in the last degree vulgar and tasteless, and the common dispositions of red, white, and blue are better adapted to delight savages, than represent the artistic status of a civilized people.'[33] Ultimately, this stereotyped repetition was painted as 'undomestic' when introduced into the home landscape: it was too 'noisy' a display for 'appropriately' laid out private gardens. As an article called 'Less Colour and More Beauty', in a *Floral World* of 1865, stated:

> Given the terraces at Sydenham and of the holiday-making throng who *do not dwell on the spot*, and the gorgeous colouring of the chain patterns and ribbons is most appropriate, but in a small private garden such colouring is by far too grand; it destroys the *quiet* which belongs of right to a domestic scene.[34]

7.2. The Economics of the New Old-English Style.

In 1908 *Memories of Gardens* made a point of favourably comparing the mixed classes of gardens made on the banks between Kingston and Windsor, whence 'the Thames flows through flowers from suburban villadom to such retreats as [...] Dropmore', the gardens of Lady Grenville:

> Every garden that sloped to the river bank was bordered with brilliant calceolarias and geraniums: the strip in front of the semi-detached cottage was as gorgeously coloured and as carefully tended as the pleasure-grounds of the wealthy banker or brewer at Thames Ditton or Walton.[35]

Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* had been a regular visitor to Dropmore in the 1830s and, although it frequently took issue with Lady Grenville's 'taste' it applauded her ingenuity in breathing new life into everyday domestic utensils, probably because one of the *Magazine*'s aims was to improve the gardens of the poor, which it hoped could be achieved by example. Thus

> it is worthy of remark and of imitation, and indeed it forms a characteristic of the artificial ornaments of Dropmore, that they are not so much made up of costly materials, as by the application of

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[33] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[34] *Floral World*, 8 (6), 1865, 116. Emphases in the original.

[35] Shand, *Memories of Gardens*, 1908, pp. 10-11.

> skill and taste, and the labour of local workmen, to articles of little intrinsic value.[36]

The following year the *Magazine* published a further description of Lady Dropmore's ingenuity. Her flower containers were rude structures transformed with

> Fantastic roots and boughs of trees, with rods of hazel [...] bark, moss, and such old boxes, barrels, tubs, or jars as may be at hand, and would otherwise be burned or thrown away. [These] are the materials which are metamorphosed into forms remarkable for their singularity [...] for example, a tripod for geraniums consists of an old cask, which had contained Roman cement; and an old Italian jar, as is sent from the oil-shops, with grapes or Genoese pickles, forms the basis of an elegant vase, which may be supported on a pedestal consisting of an old tea-chest disguised by pieces of bark.[37]

The practice of decorating summer-houses, grottoes and other garden ornaments with bark and moss had been advocated as a domestic accomplishment for even the most refined of ladies from at least the eighteenth century. Hence we may assume that in describing the gardens at Dropmore the *Magazine* hoped to encourage creative gardening among the less well-off by making an example of conspicuous, aristocratic thrift and the transforming potential of refined leisure, even where it disapproved of 'the taste for grotesque masses of roots, mosses and flowers, which seems to have been introduced into this part of the country by Lady Grenville.'[38] While there was no suggestion that Lady Grenville herself participated in the design and construction of her garden ornaments, she must have sanctioned the use of household rubbish to decorate her ample lawns. In 1843 Jane Loudon offered instructions to ladies on the making of a 'moss house' for the garden. The roof of the house was

> finished with a circle of pine cones fixed round it as a cornice; and the floor is either laid with other pine cones, or with small pebbles [...] Sometimes, however, it is paved with pieces of wood [...] and sometimes with the small bones from sheep's trotters, but the latter appears to me decidedly in bad taste.[39]

The other surfaces were carpeted with fresh moss. Mrs. Loudon saw limitless possibilities for domestic designs formed in this way and she reckoned that '[a]n old

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[36]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 2 (3), 1827, 262.

[37]*Ibid.*, 262-263.

[38]*Gardener'sMagazine*, 3 (4), 1828, 480.

[39]Jane Loudon, *Practical Instruction in Gardening for Ladies*, 1843, p. 367.

cask, a few pine cones, and a few pieces of rope' could be alchemically transformed into 'elegant ornaments' which would 'produce an almost magical effect' in the ordinary garden.[40] The principal point was, she said, 'to exercise our own skill and ingenuity'.[41] Although they were still the exception rather than the rule, articles devoted to creative thrift in the garden continued to appear in the 1850s and '60s. There was still no explicit suggestion that home-made horticultural ornaments were intended for the respectable poor or for those whose religious persuasion equated the consumption of expensive luxury goods like vases with immorality. The articles hinted instead that as well as enabling everyone to improve the condition of the nation's gardens through attention to their own plot, gardening with creative thrift was in and of itself an indication of the resourcefulness of the national character. Whatever their reasons, by the 1870s well-to-do gardening writers were regularly advocating the use of recycled domestic paraphernalia for the appropriate ornamentation of the flower garden. An article 'by a lady amateur' for *The Garden* of this period described how 'excellent use may be made of the great handsome oil-jars, which are used to bring olive oil from Italy to London.' Her reasons were not directed purely towards economy but rather the appeal of creative novelty.

> A great deal of real gardening pleasure is to be had from growing plants in pots or tubs or in vases or vessels of various kinds. Petroleum casks cut in two, burnt inside, then tarred and painted, are invaluable tubs. I use butter-casks in the same way, and have some little oak tubs in which bullion came from America.[42]

The author, Mrs. Earle, like Lady Grenville before her, had no financial need to make a career of prudence. It is more likely that Earle was amused by the deceptive incongruity of using such mundane vessels among the 'pot-pourri' of her Surrey garden, 'Woodlands'. Upper-class amateurs experimenting with household waste in their gardens were an example to those cottage and suburban gardeners who refused to eschew the more costly items with which they preferred to decorate their gardens.

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[40]Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies*, 1843, p. 369.

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 371.

[42]Reprinted in William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 221.

Bearing in mind this class's reputation for 'amateur carpentry' and its enjoyment of the sorts of shop-bought and home-made rustic garden furniture so ridiculed by contemporary writers, it was hardly surprising that its gardens did not overflow with evidently second-hand tubs and barrels. The boundaries between what had traditionally been expected of 'ordinary' gardens and of those in aristocratic and public parks were thus becoming increasingly confused.

We have seen how rank and status were commonly read from the domestic exterior of middle- and working-class homes. Although the more objective of contemporary horticultural critics cited over-exposure and a repulsion of high-Victorian decadence as reasons for the hoped-for decline and fall of the bedding system, it seems as likely that many found the increasingly apparent lack of distinction between different ranks as they were displayed in the garden bothersome, at the very least. Hence while some commentary recommended that elaborate floral displays be confined to the parks, others campaigned for a blanket ban upon all such costly gardening in favour of a return to the 'simplicity' of the old English or naturalised style of gardening, replete with a hotch-potch of recycled flower-pots. Very soon, writers were heralding the cottage garden as the archive of traditional English domestic values. Here was a landscape preserved from the corrupting influences of competitive consumption and mass-produced goods which appeared to maintain its links with the preindustrial past. Because the cottage garden seems to have attained something of a metaphysical status in the collective psyche, maintaining the tradition became a national preoccupation. Cottagers had long been accused of neglecting their gardens or, worse, allowing them to be corrupted by the modern plants seen in the gardens of their social superiors, an accusation carried into the twentieth century. Cheap food, the public house and, latterly, the cinema, were all blamed for distracting the cottager from his proper place in the garden.[43] Critics suggested that the neglect of the cottage garden was as bad for the morale of the country as it was for the morals of the cottager. The opposite view was also taken, however, but for the same ideological ends: nurturing the cottage gardener's

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[43]See Clayton-Payne, *English Flower Gardens*, 1988, p. 73

sense of inheritance and duty was essential for perpetuating the cottage garden mythology more widely. The latter tactic was adopted by the *Book of the Cottage Garden* (1909) which dismissed the notion of cottagers' horticultural emulation, laying this accusation at the door of the new middle classes, instead. 'Far from being an insignificant attempt to ape the splendours of more pretentious pleasure grounds, [the cottage garden] is in reality our nearest approach to the ideal':-

> Here is no straining after effect, no surrender to the dictates of passing fashion, no meaningless attempt to introduce into an environment utterly foreign to them, styles and mannerisms borrowed from other countries. Here we shall seek in vain the statuary and vases which, according so admirably with the stately dignity of those memory-haunted gardens of Italy, distort and make hideous the expensive "gardens" which certain architects have planned for English parvenus.[44]

Whatever the reality, the irony of reversed social status cultivated in the landscape was not lost on contemporary observers. The author of household manuals, Mrs. Loftie, for instance, put this succinctly.

> Cottagers now try to fill their little plots with geraniums and calceolarias, which they are obliged to keep indoors at great inconvenience to themselves and loss of light to their rooms. Meantime my lady at the Court is hunting the nursery grounds for London Pride and gentianella to make edgings for her wilderness.[45]

The cottage garden, when taken up by the wealthy and comfortably off, represented a 'levelling down' of wealth and status in the garden. In the cottage garden, on the other hand, the culture of tender exotics, even when dismissed as parvenu, effectively produced a 'levelling up' in horticultural taste. According to this analysis, then, while cottagers were cultivating exotics in their rustic plots, the squire was tending his homely mix of flowers and vegetables in the garden of the Big House.

It should not surprise us that lower and middle middle-class gardeners living in the suburbs, many of whom had not migrated outwards from the city but inwards from rural villages and country towns, preferred not to assume the domestic attributes and conspicuous thrift of the rustic peasant and aspired, as the peasant was also now doing,

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[44]*Ibid.*, p. 60.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 52.

to the cultivation of some of the emblems of horticultural wealth and modernity. Moreover, because it was usual to stress the conspicuous 'waste' of money and labour involved in cultivating exotics as against the natural ease with which old-fashioned flowers were supposedly raised, it was equally understandable that the poorer classes of gardener should wish to be credited with having some horticultural skill. Thorstein Veblen's theory of 'pecuniary standards of taste' is surprisingly helpful here. Writing in 1899, Veblen pronounced with customary authority that

> The portion of the leisure class that has been consistently exempt from work and from pecuniary cares for a generation or more is now large enough to form and sustain an opinion in matters of taste [...] Within this select class the exemption from thrift is a matter so commonplace as to have lost much of its utility as a basis of pecuniary decency. Therefore the latter-day upper-class canons of taste do not so consistently insist on an unremitting demonstration of expensiveness and a strict exclusion of the appearance of thrift. So a predilection for the rustic and the "natural" in parks and grounds makes its appearance on these higher social and intellectual levels.[46]

If the seemingly chaotic but productive cottage garden with its mix of cheap flowers and vegetables suggested abundance and tasteful arrangement to the rich, the same landscape was as likely to connote material and artistic poverty - Veblen's 'conspicuous thrift' - to those lower down the social scale. Owners of substantial grounds containing naturalised, wild or wilderness gardens were unlikely to fear comparisons being made between their own ample plots and the working gardens of the agricultural poor, because of both their size and location. But by the turn of the century, the taste for conspicuous garden thrift even when it was not perceived as such, was appropriated by those middle classes who were acquiring their own 'country cottages' for weekends and summer holidays. The middle classes were increasingly buying into the ideology of the new old-English garden whose preservationist function as the protector of the nation's floral heritage appealed to their senses of patriotism. Charles Thonger's *Book of the Cottage Garden* (1909) addressed just this group of rural enthusiasts. It was

> written for those who, whilst possessing country cottages, are in no sense cottagers. Nowadays, "a cottage in the country" may mean

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[46]Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (1899; Penguin, 1994), pp. 136-137.

> anything from a six-bedroomed bungalow with a diminutive garden to a commodious residence surrounded by extensive grounds.[47]

Those with both a new model English cottage and a suburban home could cultivate both an old-fashioned and an appropriately suburban garden. Most gardeners, however, combined elements from both sorts of garden in their plot, producing a hybrid version of the national garden style. In 1859, for example, a legal clerk and amateur gardener from Stoke Newington published an article in defence of British plants called 'Weeds at a Premium' in the *Floral World*. 'But there are many British plants that deserve a place in the garden,' insisted William Chitty, 'and we may cultivate "nationality" without sacrificing any taste, for there is a special charm in the contemplation of wild flowers which is much enhanced by the cultivation of them.'[48] The article continued that 'the abominable bedding-plants [did] not made me as crazy as they do other folks - blinding ones eyes to the beauties of one's native land, and driving country out of one's head by the temptations of colour, novelty, and expensiveness' *because* he had never allowed these exotic temptations to supersede his delight in 'the commonest' of national plants. Insodoing Chitty encouraged his readers to see that both sorts of flowers - bedding-plants and 'common nationals' - could be cultivated in the same plot, even in one so small as his own Stoke Newington garden.[49]

As professionals, the Leeds-based landscape gardeners Joshua Major & Son were perhaps keener most to encourage the perpetuations of both systems - bedding being far more labour intensive and thus lucrative. Although the Majors' book, *The Ladies' Assistant in the Formation of their Flower Gardens*, was basically a large folio of designs for highly ornate bedding schemes supposedly reviving the rococo designs of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and France, they introduced the work with a blatantly contradictory appeal.

> We will take this opportunity of again expressing our fear, that this new fashion of gardening is being pushed to such extremes, as to threaten soon to totally exclude from our gardens many most lovely

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[47]Cited in Clayton Payne, *Victorian Flower Gardens*, 1986, p. 68.

[48]*Floral World*, 2 (12), 1859, 275.

[49]*Ibid.*, 276.

> flowers, we mean perennial or herbaceous plants, which used to decorate our borders, and create a lively interest in our English style of flower gardens.[50]

The reader was offered a list of 'interesting perennial or herbaceous plants for the general or English flower garden' to counteract the long list of 'the choicest and most fashionable plants for the purpose' of arranging their gardens in 'the present bedding or grouping style.'[51] Their 'embroidered' parterres were to be filled with the choicest herbaceous perennials. Most writers, including Shirley Hibberd (most of the time), peddled a more convincing path midway between bedding and hardy herbaceous planting and included examples of both for good measure. Hibberd's *Floral World* was advocating a third way from the early 1860s, suggesting methods of tempering beds of 'Sydenham' colour-mixing with 'variegated edging'. This latter scheme cooled the colours of the bed in order to 'save the calceolarias from being utterly obnoxious' and the whole 'from being a downright abortion.' The magazine persevered with the bedding system because it recognised its popularity with professional and amateur gardeners, nurserymen, and the viewing public. Hence 'the band of scarlet geraniums round the calceolarias is a combination we have been compelled to get used to, for it is the one most depended on for effect in private gardens.'[52] Even William Robinson was astute enough to see that bedding remained a popular garden element despite nearly two decades of his campaigning against it. He grudgingly allowed a chapter on 'Summer-Bedding' into his *English Flower Garden* (1883) but qualified the inclusion in several ways. Most notably he reproduced a frequently misquoted, and horribly awkward passage of William Morris's *Hopes and Fear for Art* at the head of the chapter:

> Another thing also much too commonly seen, is an aberration of the human mind, which otherwise I should have been ashamed to warn you of. It is technically called carpet-bedding. Need I explain

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[50]Joshua Major and Son, *The Ladies' Assistant in the Formation of their Flower Gardens*, (Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1861), pp. 10-11.

[51]Major, *Ladies' Assistant*, 1861, subtitle.

[52]*Floral World*, 3 (9), 1860, 186.

> further? I had rather not, for when I think of it, even when I am quite alone, I blush with shame at the thought.[53]

Secondly, Robinson footnoted the chapter's title with an ingenious disclaimer. 'As the aim of this book is to show in how many ways we can make a garden beautiful apart from the bedding system, that system is described by one who carries it out with great success.'[54] Thirdly, William Wildsmith the said gardener who 'carried it out with success', excused the system on the highly unconvincing grounds that gardeners were 'in desperate straits' because 'the great bulk of hardy flowers had been ruthlessly swept out of the garden to make room for bedding plants'. He began with the usual criticism of 'scarlet Geraniums, yellow Calceolarias, blue Lobelias, or purple Verbenas [...] and [...] by way of change [...] Verbenas, Calceolarias, and Geraniums'. It was, he said, the 'gaudiness' and 'constant repetition of this scarlet, yellow, and blue [which] nauseat[ed] even those with little taste in gardening matters', rather than the bedding system *per se*. And this, he added curtly, had driven those with 'finer perceptions [...] to inquire for the Parsley bed by way of relief.'[55]

While these authors railed against the mainstream horticultural fashion for 'bedding out' primarily on grounds of taste, gardeners writing for a broader audience stressed financial waste as a reason for rejecting this trend in favour of simpler flowers and simpler methods of culture. Those who advocated the middle or third way, however, seemingly could not win. Wildsmith's remark about Parsley was intended as a rebuke to those garden writers who advocated the use of kitchen-garden plants as decorative bedders. In 1863 *Gossip for the Garden* 'praise[d] the bedding system at main centres and for those who can afford it'[56] but also acknowledged that 'it must be quite possible to grow flowers without such an awful waste of money - how otherwise could the cottagers afford to have such pretty flowers in their gardens?'[57] The

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[53]William Morris, in Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 204.

[54]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 204.

[55]William Wildsmith, in Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 204.

[56]*Gossip for the Garden*, 8 (January), 1863, 7.

[57]*Ibid.*, 9.

following year, an article on 'Bedders for the million' in the *Floral World* noted that '[t]he cost of a grand bedding display is often a subject of surprise to persons unaccustomed to garden expenditures' and wisely suggested a mixture of traditional herbaceous plants, annuals and the fast growing variegated mint.[58] *Gossip for the Garden* had also recommended variegated mint but in a more radical arrangement with 'common red beet and curled parsley'. It supposed that these could most easily be adopted 'by persons to whom the acquisition of routine "bedding" plants at three or four shillings a dozen would be an utter impossibility.'[59]

Writers from the Robinsonian camp also recommended the use for decorative purposes of those plants normally reserved for the kitchen garden; many, though not all, of these writers were women. Frances Hope, a regular contributor of articles to the *Gardener's Chronicle* as well as Robinson's *The Garden*, was known as 'the redoubtable Champion of the Kales'.[60] In 1872 she wrote that 'Vegetable ribbon borders [...] will no doubt sound rather strange to florists, but let me assure them that vegetable ribbon borders can vie with Pelargoniums, and Purple Kings [verbenas], and other such small fry'. 'In fact', she said, 'for usefulness and ornament combined, we cabbage-growers have the best of it.' A typical Hope recipe combined '[t]wo lines of White or Seakale Beet; next come two rows of Altrincham Carrots; then three of Barr's Pineapple Beet; finished with three lines of Parsley.'[61] The editor of the *Gardener's Chronicle* dedicated his appendix to Miss Hope's posthumously published collection of journal articles, *Notes and Thoughts on Gardens and Woodlands* , and defended her work by way of an obituary.

> People are apt to ridicule any attempt, to decorate Flower Beds, with Kale we have been rather accustomed, to associate it with corned beef, and the "Kale-yard," and hence the prejudice, of transferring it to the Flower Garden'.

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[58]*Floral World,* 7 (4), 1864, 75.

[59]*Gossip for the Garden*, 8 (January), 1863, 10-11.

[60]Frances Jane Hope, *Notes and Thoughts on Gardens and Woodlands*, (Macmillan & Co., 1881), Appendix: 'Winter Gardening and Kale Beds', p. 299.

[61]Frances Jane Hope, 'Vegetable Ribbon Borders', *Gardener's Chronicle*, February 10 1872, 181.

Miss Hope's 'Kale Beds would,' he concluded 'add both grace, and beauty, to the most imposing Flower Garden.'[62]

7.3. Class and the Cult of the Amateur in the New Old-English Garden.

Mary Hampden's *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener* (1915) criticised the Press for having, until recently, sneered at the vast majority of small, highly visible, roadside suburban gardens, with the result that 'the pleasure grounds that were not hidden away were scorned'. She could, however, see that 'something of a democratic spirit has stirred since then' and that the 'evil effects' of the 'craze for privacy' had lessened. Her celebration of publicly visible gardens looked forward to a time when 'pocket-handkerchief' plots would be better enjoyed than the exclusive 'shut away gardens of loneliness'. Hampden's allusions to democracy and openness in the domestic environment and her disdain for 'delicious luxuries for the few', suggest that she was thinking of the government of the English landscape more broadly.[63] Nevertheless, the book was no revolutionary tract and having defended the ordinary suburban garden plot she, like so many commenting upon suburban gardens, regretted its unimaginative uniformity, where 'nine-tenths of the gardens along suburban roads so closely resemble each other that the chance preponderance of one of the flowers or shrubs, is thought to constitute a marked novelty.'[64] *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener* explained the imitative monotony of 'old-fashioned' suburban gardens in exactly the same way as had the *Gentlewoman's Book of the Garden* (see Chapters Four and Five). Both books maintained that although 'some of our ancestresses paid genuine homage to Flora [...] *the majority of women were willing to leave flower culture to hired men.*'[65] Hampden's book attributed the repetitive state of the suburban garden in 1915 not only to the gardeners hired by the household, but to those employed

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[62]Hope, *Notes and Thoughts*, 1881, p. 299.

[63]Mary Hampden, *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener*, (Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1915), p. 2.

[64]Hampden, *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener*, 1915, p. 5.

[65]*Ibid.*, p. 6, emphasis mine.

in the laying out of gardens by the speculative builder. 'Who,' asked Hampden, 'has not sadly watched florists' men laying out gardens to freshly-built houses?' These little gardens were made monotonous with the bare minimum of common nursery favourites, usually a line or two of Japanese or Portugal laurels, privet or flowering shrubs by way of a hedge, a lawn, and perhaps a standard rose or flowering tree as its central ornament. It was then up to the householder to ornament their new garden with the native annuals and 'foreigners' like pelargoniums, calceolarias and lobelia from the southern parts of Africa and the Americas available as seedlings and cuttings from the nursery. Here were

> laburnum, prim hawthorn, and acacia, set in a row by the front railing, plain laurels in a line against the tradesmen's path, a grassy expanse of unadorned beds [...] the side borders dotted over with Portugal laurel, barberries, a golden privet, and perhaps one rhododendron [...] if the season is winter the edges of the spoilt borders are sure to be filled with shrivelled wallflowers; if it is summer, with the poorest geraniums, calceolarias, and asters.[66]

The remedy proposed for this sad arrangement was a startling reversal of Chamberlain's and Douglas's interpretation of the English garden with its appointed foreign ambassadors (see below). Although her model remained unacknowledged, Hampden seemed to offer a direct challenge to the *Gentlewoman's* conception of the English garden and purposefully introduced some exoticised horticultural passion into the lacklustre planting of the typical early twentieth-century English suburban garden. This was a 'garden [...] that might, just as economically, display the scarce-known glories of the veldt, blaze with the vivid blossoms that have been introduced from South and West America, blush with roses, shiver with the silver of lilies.'[67] Hampden's plea was less an appeal for a return to imperial triumphalism and more a protest against the whole notion of what was aesthetically appropriate in the garden at any given moment. Clearly the two were related, but *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener* was concerned to counter the top-down direction of horticultural criticism rather than the species and origin of the plants it discussed. Her comments that 'it is

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[66]*Ibid*, p. 5.

[67]*Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

perilously easy to become vulgarly aesthetic', and that 'Carpet-bedding has been vetoed as a desecration of Nature, for instance, but who wants "Nature undefiled" just under the windows or by the front door?' were calculated to attack such criticism from all sides. In suggesting that it was 'vulgarly aesthetic' to disdain carpet-bedding she neatly inverted the proper meaning of vulgar and, instead of applying it to the popular taste of the lower, suburban and supposedly inartistic classes, applied it to the higher classes of aesthete. To describe something as aesthetic at this time was to invite a variety of responses ranging from ridicule to repugnance. Since the Oscar Wilde trials in the 1890s, the so-called Aesthetic Movement epitomised in the unconventional domestic arrangements of Chelsea and the Bedford Park Garden Suburb at Turnham Green, 'aesthetic' had come to suggest a way of life that was vaguely improper. Aesthetes supposedly operated on the fringes of respectable society, yet were frequently of a higher social status than their critics.[68] The adjective aesthetic was increasingly a term of derision applied to activities that were theatrical, effeminate, unEnglish even, all of which Mary Hampden well knew. Questioning whether 'Nature undefiled' was an appropriate setting for the front door, was similarly deliberate. Whatever their opinions about how the perimeter be set out, all garden writers agreed that the area immediately surrounding the house should be clearly demarcated as 'made landscape' or garden. Hampden's point here was that the distinction was largely irrelevant to her readers, whose small suburban 'tablecloth lawns, pocket-handkerchief flower-beds, and ribbon-wide borders'[69] bore little comparison to the extensive grounds of the aesthetic suburban environment. She also recognised that the little plots she wrote about had to serve as space for games and the 'open air life' which was had become an increasingly important social function of the garden from the turn of the century and which was 'gaining in favour every day.'[70]

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[68]See Margaret Jones Bolsterli, *The Early Community at Bedford Park, 'Corporate Happiness' in the First Garden Suburb*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), esp. p. 59.

[69]Hampden, *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener*, 1915, p. 2.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 121.

The tendency for the gardening press to treat of smaller and smaller suburban gardens as the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries progressed both reflected and was encouraged by the directions taken by the building trade (figs. 3.16-3.19). Speculative builders were, in turn, responding at once to the national economy and to the demands of an expanding lower-middle class whose poorest strata could afford to purchase only the smallest of suburban homes, but which, ideally, had its own back garden, however handkerchief-like (figs. 7.7). Ironically, this poorest class of suburban home was often more consistently provided with a garden than its otherwise more comfortable neighbours. Urban building regulations designed to prevent slum formation required that garden space be supplied in working-class and artisanal housing districts in order to retain fresh air and light, the late-Victorian weapons against the slum. *Common Sense Gardening*, a periodical collection of the weekly *An Amateur's Garden*, published in five editions by the *Sunday Chronicle* in 1915, aimed at just this audience, the mechanic and artisan amateurs gardening in the inner suburbs. 'The Average Man' was both the author and its subject, in similar fashion to Mary Hampden's 'Every Woman', and he recognised that the plot could not always give up all its space to gardening, even though he was disdainful of the reasons. In a leading article called 'The Amateur's Garden', he recommended that 'If it can be managed - if the children do not use the garden as a playground, nor the women-folk as a drying place, nor anyone else as a thoroughfare - it is worthwhile trying to do without a path at all in the usual oblong garden of the suburbs'. But, given these provisos, he reckoned that 'if the whole of the garden is devoted to grass, save for a surrounding strip or border or a side border only, some really picturesque designs can be arranged.'[71] This slim volume, price 3*d*., had as its frontispiece a photograph of a father and son at work in the garden together to suggest its intended readership. It ran a 'Gardening Prize Essay Competition', promised answers to all correspondents, and included chapters on 'Suburban Problems', how 'To Enlarge Little Gardens', 'The Hot Town Corner' and 'the wall garden's twin-sister': 'The Rockery'. *Common-Sense Gardening* assumed

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[71]Anon., *Common-Sense Gardening*, (*Sunday Chronicle*, 1915), p. 1.

the reader had no paid assistance in his garden and that 'a roomy shaded seat for the whole family' could be achieved with only 'a few hours of amateur carpentry'.[72] It also had a chapter on 'Old English Flowers' intended for the 'homely garden' as opposed to the 'show garden' before the house. The list of flowers given was the result of the author's 'pains to secure the opinions of a number of well-known gardeners, antiquaries, and the like, as to what should and should not be found in a garden that might fairly be described "old English".'[73] By inference the skilled-classes of gardening amateur could not, by 1915, be assumed to know instinctively the make-up of the nation's garden style, even though that English garden frequently appeared as a symbol for the nation as a whole.

Writing in March 1915, the author of *My Villa Garden*, one S. Graveson took a different path within a comparably small, suburban plot and expanded on how this ordinary garden could make up for the inability to travel abroad. Not only did the war make intercontinental journeys for pleasure physically and economically difficult, the idea of travel itself had somehow become tainted by its association with mobilisation. It was also becoming increasingly apparent by the time the book was published in 1916, that the object of tourism itself - the landscape - had become associated more with death and destruction than flights of exotic fantasy. The fact that this book was dedicated to 'the lady of the garden', probably owed more to the war going on than a vicarious 'appeal to ladies' as a means of interesting their men. All we know of the author is that he commuted each day to London from his villa and that he paid a man to mow his lawn, which may have indicated a lack of physical strength but most probably that he hadn't a mower of his own. Both *My Villa Garden* and *Common-Sense Gardening* advised against the growing of vegetables on the grounds that they were both cheap and readily available, they wasted space and that poor air quality made vegetable culture an uphill struggle. Growing vegetables in so overlooked an area as the inner suburbs may also have suggested poverty, of which most householders were

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[72]*Common-Sense Gardening*, 1915, p. 23.

[73]*Ibid.*, 1915, p. 96.

keen to avoid the slightest appearance. Whatever Graveson's background the garden had become a whole new world where he was the vicarious explorer. This world was exoticised, but it lacked the feminised sexuality of the Other landscapes discussed in Chapter Six.

> My own small garden, a garden which measures approximately twenty-five feet wide by one hundred feet long. In this little world we are always discovering something new; every month of the year reveals the floral treasures of many other lands than our own. The exigencies of twentieth-century civilization do not permit of more than a small minority of us becoming explorers of the wild places of the earth, but in a garden we may experience some of the feelings of the explorer as we watch the breaking of the earth [sic] crust in spring.[74]

One hundred pages later this slim book of rationed paper focused on the exoticism of a particular group of plants, best-known as red-hot pokers. I have suggested that this garden's exoticism was not conceived of in feminine terms as we normally understand them, but whether we read this strident exploratory exoticism as in any way homoerotic I leave for the reader to judge.

> The Torch Lily, *alias* Kniphofia, *alias* Tritoma, *alias* Flame-flower, *alias* Lilywort, has always had a fascination for me. What child is there who has not been at some time or another fascinated with a red-hot-poker [...] growing in the garden. The Tritomas seem to bring home to one as no other flower the tropic heat of Africa. True, most of the varieties seen in our English gardens come from far south of the Tropics, that most gorgeous flower garden of the world, the Cape.
>
> Less than a month ago there was no sign of a flower spike among the reed-like foliage of the Tritomas. Then a pale yellow spear-head appeared, followed a day later by another, and then another, until the jungle was bristling with spear-heads.[75]

Not all garden writers preferred to encourage the sorts of sensory experiences which this sort of garden cultivated, even when they were discussed at length. It is perhaps notable that many of those ostensibly rejecting this sexualised garden were women. However, their attitudes were far from clear-cut and most dealings with the nature of exotics and the senses they excited were unresolved, not to say confused. Edith Chamberlain's and Fanny Douglas's *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*

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[74]S. Graveson, *My Villa Garden*, (Headley Brothers, 1916), 'foreword', n.p.

[75]Graveson, *My Villa Garden*, 1916, p. 100.

(1892), for instance, briskly refused a foreign relative of the English bluebell a place in the English garden because of its feminised oriental associations, only to enjoy a breathy reverie upon exactly the same theme a paragraph later:

> The hyacinth is one of the few florist's flowers which has a perfume. But its smell is not an English one - it is too rich and heavy. Rather does it breathe reminiscences of its Eastern home, and we associate it more readily with the song of the bulbul, and "the fragrant flowers of Amherabad," than with an English garden. It is one of the harem of night flowers.[76]

If it seems odd that the book orientalises both the hyacinth and the nightingale, its notion that scented flowers 'are to the undiscriminating male gardener as nought, compared with scentless and brilliant begonias, gladioli, geraniums, abutilons, cannas, marguerites, and dahlias'[77] seems at first even more so, given the passion for scent expressed by so many male garden writers. It would seem that while some scents were considered pure and English, and some were intoxicatingly alien, the *Gentlewoman's Book* believed that male gardeners were apt to forgo all scent in favour of brazenly visual plants, in this case sub-tropical bedders. Their theory only makes sense when it was made apparent that the male gardeners in question are *staff* employed in the gentlewoman's garden, and not the gentlewoman's aesthetically sensible husband and gardening partner.

Hired gardeners, however skilled, were usually considered by their English, amateur-gardening employers to lack the finer points of empathy necessary for true garden appreciation and design. This appreciation included, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, a suitably patriotic approach to gardening, based more on exclusion than inclusion. Although the guiding logic was vague, expulsion was directed more to plants which looked, sounded, and smelt exotic than to those which actually originated from exotic climes, howsoever these were defined. According to the better-off amateur, hired gardeners judged their gardens on the lesser merits of instant gratification - bold colours, rampant growth, intricate forms - and not on either the

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[76]Edith Chamberlain and Fanny Douglas, *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*, (Henry & Co., 1892), p. 44.

[77]Chamberlain and Douglas, *Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*, 1892, p. 46.

study of the histories of individual plants or their appropriateness within the larger landscape. Professional gardeners must therefore be instructed to follow orders directed by the aesthetically and culturally-educated employer, who gardened for pleasure rather than for a wage, in order to stop them inventing base designs of their own. This was the mission undertaken by *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening* - to encourage middle- and upper-class women to manage their male staff without fear of insolence, and to educate the uncertain gentlewoman in the new gardening convictions. 'The ordinary gardener, if left to himself,' warned the authors, 'will devote all his energies to making a great display in summer; though he may be induced to give some of the space in *his* borders, formerly occupied by *his* endless "bedders out", to herbaceous plants.'[78]

Geometric flower beds of high-coloured exotics could be copied mechanically from the multitude of patterns published in gardening books and magazines. Such gardening, with the human hand always in evidence was, at the end of the nineteenth century, the most controversial horticultural 'method'. Its detractors described it as being aesthetically, culturally and racially alien to the truly English landscape. Where the English landscape was smooth and green and wooded, 'geometrical' gardening was brash and artificial; where its lines were free and liberal, the latter's were rigid and imposed; the former was strong and healthy from its roots in a temperate climate, the latter was made weak and sickly because nurtured by enervating tropical heat. In fine, the new old-English garden, like the English landscape itself, was appreciable only by amateur, artistically sensitive gardeners, who designed for private contemplation rather than vulgar show. As a contributor to *Blackwoods Magazine* put it as early as 1853, '[s]ome prime old favourites [...] have lost their place in the parterre to make room for the upstart parvenus of vaunting propagators'.[79] The parvenu bedding-system, then, was the province of the hired, or professional, gardener; the infant gardener; and the

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[78]*Ibid.*, p. 43. Emphases mine.

[79]'The Garden', *Blackwoods Magazine*, 73 (1853), 133, cited in Waters, *Garden in Victorian Literature*, 1988.

nouveaux riches and expatriate gardener. The garden which was made over in carpet beds and ribbon borders was believed to be appreciable only by the 'non-gardening classes'.

7.4. On the Scent of 'Englishness'

The garden of scentless flowers catalogued as favoured by the paid gardener was not only monotonous and mimetic, it was unpatriotic. *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening* made this point explicitly. 'Of all these' scentless plants, it began,

> the marguerites are perhaps the only plants of purely British breed. The geranium has numerous English relations, and maybe considered a naturalised foreigner. The pelargonium is, however, a decided colonial, and hails from the Cape of Good Hope. The begonias are tropical invaders [from South America], and have somewhat of an alien look upon a smooth English lawn, whilst the abutilon comes from Brazil. The Gladioli comes from the Cape of Good Hope, and the Dahlias from Mexico, although the latter plant is, curiously enough, named after a Swedish botanist. Spanish travellers brought it to Madrid about the time of the French Revolution, but it was not until after Waterloo that it was fairly at home in our borders. Against this terrible invasion of foreigners we would protest.[80]

Although the breadth and strength of the above protestation against 'foreigners' is unusually accented when measured against the broad spectrum of horticultural literature in the period between about 1870 and 1914, the actual sentiment was fairly widespread. This book's particularly comprehensive dismissal of the sorts of exotics usually employed in grand bedding schemes, can, perhaps, be ascribed to two things. First, the book was published in 1892 as part of the 'Victoria Library for Gentlewomen' series. It was, in being endorsed by the Queen, perhaps more than usually jingoistic for the period. Second, in view of the stress laid upon plants from southern Africa, the book's antipathy to these highly visible Cape species might also be ascribed to 'the whole crisis decade of the 1890s' in the Transvaal and the Cape.[81] This would also account for the authors' somewhat laboured application of literary terms to imply

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[80] *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

[81] Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914*, (1976; Macmillan Press, 1993), p. 240.

revolution, invasion and battle within garden history in the period, especially given the various centennial anniversaries commemorated in Europe at about that time.

Like most garden writers, however, Chamberlain and Douglas could not afford to be too prescriptive in their call for expelling foreigners from the English garden. Not only did they know that the public would find such a wholesale revolution untenable, (and for reasons not wholly ideological) but the authors' grasp of geographical botany was firm enough to realise that this would leave the English garden rather bare. Using the same language of military- and state-craft to effect a continuation of alien and native tensions in the garden, a horticultural compromise was suggested: 'A certain proportion of [the foreigners] may be admitted as ambassadors, and their brilliant uniforms will give status and distinction to the floral court, but they should not be allowed to oust wholly our sweet-scented, old-fashioned English natives.'[82] The resulting garden was basically the same as that already being cultivated by Robinson and Jekyll, only far more explicitly and coherently ideologically grounded, however bizarre its logic. It comprised a mixture of perennial English 'traditional', 'old-fashioned' or 'wild-flower' species, grown together in apparently unfettered profusion into which foreign 'ambassadors' could harmoniously be integrated. Planted in artistic or painterly groups in mixed or herbaceous borders, native and exotic species were given equal prominence, or were indistinguishable; exotics were disciplined not by their regimented planting in lines but in being made to acclimatise to the rigors of the temperate English climate. Many of the exotics were in any case related to the natives, such as the pelargonium mentioned above. The most important ingredient of all, however, was grass. The integrated foreign and native plants were supporting acts to the English lawn. Flowers and shrubs were collected together in borders, or as plain shaped island beds within the lawn, because concluded *The Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*, 'it is pure vandalism to cut up the green expanse by spotting it over with circles, triangles, and octopus-like patterns'.[83] By extension, in carving the lawn into alien shapes, the

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[82]Chamberlain and Douglas, *Gentlewoman's Book of Gardening*, 1892, p. 47.

[83]*Ibid.*, p. 50.

vandals would be attacking the Englishness of the garden itself. As Rudyard Kipling wrote in 1911

> Our England is a garden that is full of stately views,
> Of borders, beds, and shrubberies and lawns and avenues,
> With statues on the terraces and peacocks strutting by;
> But the Glory of the Garden lies in more than meets the eye.[84]

What little jingoism was expressed by in horticulture's amateur and trade press was in general confined to discussions of roses. But because English roses were pitted against their French counterparts throughout the period between 1815 and 1915, we should see this petty nationalism as rivalry with the 'old enemy' over the water rather than jingoism in the proper sense of the word. Although the rose was universally recognised as England's national flower, it was generally acknowledged that the Paris rose-growers stole a march on both the English and Scotch in propagation skills. While the criticism of French roses stemmed from understandable English embarrassment at the inability to excel in 'their' special branch of floriculture this did not help them when it came to inventing reasons for the higher intrinsic qualities of the English rose. Hence English and Scotch growers tended to focus first upon the 'ridiculousness' of French rose names and second on their supposedly 'Gallic' appearance and tendencies. 'A Reckoning with Roses' in this vein, asked the reader 'of what use are those large, flaunting, loose-petalled flowers'? They 'bear the same relation to what a good rose ought to be that "soup maigre" does to roast beef, or the attenuated French coquette does to a buxom English belle.'[85] 'O the rubbish in the shape of Roses,' exclaimed *Gossip for the Garden* in 1863, 'which his versatile neighbour over the way palms off on simple John Bull'.[86] 'The rose *Princess of Wales*, sent out by Mr. William Paul, promises to the lead [among] the aristocracy of

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[84]Rudyard Kipling, "The Glory of the Garden," in *A School History of England* by C. R. L. Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), pp. 249-250.

[85]*Floral World*, 7 (12), 1864, 260.

[86]*Gossip for the Garden*, 8 (April), 1863, 109.

roses: it is not only massive and distinct, but has an iron constitution, and justifies itself as a genuine English Rose.'[87] Mr. W. D. Prior, rosarian of Homerton, repeated that

> I cannot refrain from a passing remark upon the outrageously absurd nomenclature bestowed by Gallic raisers upon their progeny. The less educated among the gardening tribe must be sorely puzzled by such names as "Triomphe de Villecresnes," "Docteur Vingtrinier," "Gloire de Sacre Coeur," [and] "Pavillion de Pregny".'[88]

Three years later Prior began a seemingly straightforward article on 'Roses for the Garden' with 'a list of some of these bygone charmers, which recall the days of stomachers and lace or the short waist and garments of Regent George's period.' Making an explicit link between the inappropriateness of modern women's apparel, modern hybrid flowers, and French invasions of a non-military kind, he was quickly drawn into his favourite discussion of wanton French roses. The English roses of the Regent's period were

> as superior, possibly, in real taste and fitness to the modern trains and chignons, as the roses themselves are to the half foreign, flaunting, loose-eyed pretenders we get so many of, but which, fortunately soon retire into the limbo of merited oblivion.[89]

But despite their regular appearance in the press, these outbursts of anti-Gallic sympathy were calculated to show the author's great English (or Scottish) wit as much as any serious animosity. Previewing the 'New Roses for 1867', Mr. Prior offered a typical example of the patriotic rosarian's 'humour'. It is notable, however, that he chose the exotically savage figure of the French colonial warmonger rather than the regular soldier to emphasise his point.

> The annual French invasion of these shores is now taking place; not in the dire or hostile form of bearded Turco, or fierce Zouave armed with the formidable "chassepot" rifle, but under the more pleasing and insidious guise of charming roses.[90]

Gardening with exotics and foreigners, although prevalent for most of the nineteenth century, had been held in check by fondness for 'old-fashioned' and English

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[87]*Floral World*, 7 (10), 1864, 213.

[88]*Floral World*, 7 (6), 1864, 123-124.

[89]*Floral World*, 1 (new series), (11), 1866, 367-368.

[90]*Ibid.*, 334.

wild flowers throughout; as we have seen, magazines like the *Floral World* were already heralding the 'return' of the 'mixed' or 'choice' border of hardy herbaceous plants to its readers in 1865. But protest against those gardeners who steadfastly refused to cease cultivating their alien taste at the expense of the scent and beauty of the English landscape and garden accelerated in the last years of the century and continued into the next.

7.5. Horticulture and Technology.

It was not only the fear of 'denationalisation' in the garden which prompted its defence of 'simple' English flowers. The criticism levied against 'unnatural' or 'ignoble' gardening was also founded in the repugnance felt by many at the overtly sexual language which had been used to explain modern propagation from the late-eighteenth century, and so this was read from the products themselves. The foreign origin of many of these plants, and the sultry conditions required for their cultivation, rendered any sexual connotations even more deeply entrenched. Ruskin's disgust at the idea of 'hybridity' was extreme but not without precedent, comparable views having appeared in the work of earlier writers such as William Cobbett. Cobbett pointed to Scottish gardeners working in English gentlemen's gardens as particular exponents of what was called 'sexualism'. He equated botanical approaches to horticulture with laziness and effeminacy as well as 'unEnglishness'. In portraying the immigrant Scottish gardener as engaged only with 'tying up flowers, picking dead leaves off exotics, peeping into melon frames, publishing the banns of marriage between the "male" and "female" blossoms, tap-tap-tapping against a wall with a hammer that weighs half an ounce',[91] Cobbett was suggesting that it was unpatriotic as well as unproductive to favour science over labour.[92]

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[91]William Cobbett, *Rural Rides* 1830, (1), (London and New York: Everyman, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1857), p. 84.

[92]It was also an opportunity for him to denigrate the Scots who made up a large number, if not a majority, of the best gardeners in Britain.

Cobbett's misgivings were echoed even more loudly at the end of the century. Many theorists who equated aesthetics with morality were upset by the increasingly apparent interference with nature in the garden through botanical and horticultural science. Technological 'improvement' undertaken by hybridists of individual plants on the one hand and, on the other, the mass production of modern bedding-out 'systems' were threatening to denationalise hardy indigenous flora and corrupt the nature of old English gardens. Industrial metaphors were increasingly used to denigrate the bright 'patterns' made by lines of bedding plants. Robinson blamed the influence of the '*showy dyes*' and '*coloured cottons*' promoted by '*chemists and decorators*', in comparison with which all but the most 'glaring' of bedders paled into insignificance.[93] One of the few voices of protest raised against this damning of popular taste for bright colours was female. 'It has been,' wrote Alice Morse Earle in her *Old Time Gardens* (1901), 'the custom of late to sneer at crimson in the garden, especially if its vivid colour gets a dash of purple and becomes what Miss Jekyll calls "malignant magenta"'. A. M. Earle conceded that the colour magenta was 'really more vulgar than malignant, and has come to be in textile products a stamp and symbol of vulgarity, through the forceful brilliancy of our modern aniline dyes'. Although Earle's qualification in defence of the colour acknowledged the influences of modern textile manufacture upon contemporary horticulture she followed it with a carefully timed reference to magenta's historical affiliations. 'This colour,' she concluded happily, 'shows that time as well as place affects our colour notions, for magenta is believed to be the honoured royal purple of the ancients.'[94] Despite such conciliatory appeals to history most critics of modern horticultural progress preferred to torment themselves with the tensions between art and science. William Wildsmith, for instance, wrote that the result of this unnatural competition in the English garden was 'Finicking beds, reminding one of the

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[93]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 284. Emphases mine.

[94]Alice Morse Earle, *Old Time Gardens*, 1901, quoted in Kellaway, *Women Gardeners*, (Virago, 1995), pp. 95-96.

art on *fire-shovels* and other productions'.[95] Shirley Hibberd's *The Amateur's Flower Garden* (1871) made a more general point about the difference between the true flower garden and the garden corrupted by industrially influenced practices.

> A few simple borders, well stocked with mixed herbaceous plants [...] would, in many circumstances, afford more real pleasure and ever changing interest than the most gorgeous display of bedding plants hemmed in between two glaring walls, or exposed on a great treeless, turfless place like *the blazing fire at the mouth of a coal-pit*.[96]

History could not be applied to horticultural arguments indiscriminately, however. Robinson complained about the 'bad and frivolous design' of flower beds which had resulted from the 'adapting of absurd "knots" and patterns from old books to any surface' because they were unsuited to their new situations and contexts. He compared the influence of old gardening patterns upon the modern garden with a more modern printed medium. '[W]e cannot,' he thundered in 1889, 'have the foregrounds of beautiful English scenery daubed with a flower garden like a *coloured advertisement*'.'[97] Nor were the ruinous effects of invasive technology confined only to the flower beds. Robinson also identified them in the 'style of garden "design" that has had an injurious effect on many places': 'the "*railway embankment*" phase of landscape gardening madness'.[98]

Contemporaries feared that the English garden was being corrupted by hybridisation, alien species, industry, modern communications and new money. Protecting this English garden from invasion gained urgency as it was increasingly used to represent not only the ideal domestic plot but the country as a whole. Bedding out was also associated with the power, money and conspicuous consumption of industrialists themselves. The invention of tradition within garden-craft at this time was closely associated with folk revivals in architecture, dress, music, and other cultural

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[95]William Wildsmith, 'Summer Bedding' in Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 208, emphasis mine.

[96]Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower Garden*, 1871, p. 5, emphasis mine.

[97]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, pp. 5-6, emphasis mine.

[98]*Ibid.*, p. 12, emphasis mine.

practices. As we have seen, in reality the old herbaceous plants had never disappeared from suburban gardens only to be salvaged at the last moment the cottager's plot.[99] It was the incessant attention to new and foreign species, their hybridity, and the technologies they concealed which frightened traditionalists into calling for the preservation of old-English plants, to protect them from racial, cultural and technological impurity.

Defence of the new horticultural technology was, unsurprisingly, voiced loudly by the trade which perpetuated it. *The Culture of Vegetables and Flowers from Seeds and Roots* (1884), by Sutton & Sons of Reading, for example, noted that 'we appear to be passing through an era of excessive activity in gardening'[100] and that 'a real revolution has taken place in the economy and complexion of the English Flower Garden.'[101] According to a publicity circular issued to mark the firm's centenary in 1906, this revolution had been achieved 'by hybridization, the crossing of one variety with another, and by the patient selection and reselection'[102] of the company nursery. It also lauded the 'cultivators [who] are at this moment tending flowers in the antipodes and the Himalayas to beautify English gardens in due time.'[103] Because Sutton's was a seed merchants, it had an additional interest in ending the fashion for bedding, and so combined its modern breeding techniques to improve the seeds of 'old-fashioned' varieties of flowers. In spite of its modernity, then, Sutton's method had the appeal of simplicity: compared with 'the laborious and precarious mode of perpetuation by cuttings' seed sowing seemed both natural and traditional.[104] It was also much cheaper

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[99]Brent Elliott, 'Commercial Horticulture in Victorian London' in Mireille Galinou (ed.), *London's Pride: the Glorious History of the Capital's Gardens*, (Anaya Publishers with the Museum of London, 1990), p. 175.

[100]Sutton & Sons, *The Culture of Vegetables and Flowers from Seeds and Roots'*, (Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1884), p. 1.

[101]*Ibid.*, p. 196.

[102]Reading Local Studies Library, R/10:15759. Sutton & Sons, 'After One Hundred Years', reprinted in *The Times*, 22nd Dec 1905, p. 7.

[103]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

[104]Sutton, *Culture of Vegetables and Flowers*, 1884, pp. 194-195.

and, following the strict regulations of firms like Sutton's, also far more reliable. Further, the arguments for improving strains and races of plants took place within the context of contemporary discussions about eugenics, which may have alleviated any fears of miscegenation which inter-plant breeding might have aroused. For example,

> Continuous propagation, under artificial conditions, of the hollyhock and verbena, for instance, had debilitated their constitutions, and to renew these and other plants in their beauty, recourse was had to the culture of their seed [...] By eliminating the weaklings and perpetuating only those of the clearest and finest strains, new races of flowers have been evolved, as superior to those which grew in gardens half a century ago, as they are easily cultivated by seed.[105]

The article declared its long-standing commitment to improving alien species for English consumption and noted particular achievements made in the improvement of the Primula from China, and grasses from South Africa and Canada.

The fact that arguments against bedding were increasingly economically grounded was much to Sutton's advantage. The agricultural slump of the 1870s had bankrupted many landed families whose estates supported thousands of gardeners who practised bedding-out at the height of its popularity. Other estates were parcelled up and sold off to such an extent that there was neither the space nor the staff to perpetuate this sort of extravagant planting on the little land left. This section of society was looking increasingly weedy and debilitated itself, in need of an injection of new life blood, or crossing with a foreign strain.[106] Hibberd complained that 'we frequently see what would be very respectable beds ruined by the use of old horse-shoe geraniums, that have been in the family for a century.'[107] Such beds were found in the older 'suburban districts, where the folks are not quite up to the sorts they ought to be'. Of humble stock himself, and in the habit of moving house and garden regularly, Hibberd mocked what he perceived to be the laissez-faire attitude of the longer-established suburban classes to their gardens. Their plots had been rendered unproductive through

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[105]Sutton, 'After One Hundred Years', R/10:15759, p. 17.

[106]See J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches: Style and Status in Victorian and Edwardian Architecture*, (John Murray, 1999).

[107]Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments*, 1857, p. 373.

complacency, idleness and by allowing paid gardeners *carte blanche* to do as they wished in their master and mistress's plots. Collections of worn-out plants signalled neglect and, worse, were indicative of their own deteriorating stock brought on by profligacy. 'The old scarlet horse-shoe completes its insufficiency by seeding most inveterately,' he wrote amusedly, 'so that every truss soon becomes a perfect nest of stork's bills, and its fertility a perfect nuisance.'[108] Derived from the genus Pelargonium, the cultivated geranium, in this case the old-fashioned horse-shoe type, had reverted to something approaching the wild strain of common cranesbill, a flower common to the English countryside. Hibberd deliberately misnamed this geranium as stork's bill to stress further the associations with human issue.

Another, not unconnected factor contributed to the decline in favour of domestic bedding-out. Households which could afford the labour necessary for seasonal bedding schemes on any significant scale were not matched by the numbers who kept both town and country houses. The traditional method of bedding-out left bare patches of earth during the winter months, even when these were restocked with bulbs for spring bedding. In winter wealthy country families had traditionally removed to town for the court and parliamentary seasons. Naturally this system did not appeal to those who lived in their homes all year round, even if they could afford to keep a full-time gardener to undertake the work. Along with the stress upon plant re-invigoration, the appeal of the year-round garden was the aspect which Sutton's, like an increasing number of nursery publications, chose to emphasise in its campaign for an English garden grown from scientifically-improved seeds and roots.

> It has ceased to be needful to keep such large stocks of bedding and other tender plants under glass through the winter, and very much of the accustomed labour in striking and potting cuttings, as well as the expense of glass, fuel, labour, and the frequent purchase of high priced varieties have become unnecessary.[109]

Although the company persisted with such reasoning, it attempted not to be overly prescriptive. Commercial sense steered Sutton's towards a middle path which allowed

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[108]*Ibid.*, p. 374.

[109]*Ibid.*, p. 197.

for some bedders, while the remaining earth was to be filled with plants grown from seeds, bulbs and corms, by division, or struck from roots:

> We do not hope by these brief remarks to change the prevailing fashion - indeed, we have no particular wish that way - but we feel bound to observe that it is sufficient for the beauty of the garden that the greenhouse bedders should be confined to the parterre proper, for it is a waste of space and opportunity to place them in the borders everywhere, as is too commonly done. In the sunny borders, annual and perennial herbaceous plants are far more appropriate.[110]

Sutton's also suggested that the tender plants required for bedding out or planting under glass could also be propagated by seed and root division rather than cuttings. Interestingly, in this case the company did not choose to focus upon the economic benefits of annual and perennial bedding schemes; instead it told of the ease of labour and greater reliability with which they were now achievable, presumably so as not to offend status-conscious amateurs by appearing to question their wealth.

> Why should a man who has to decorate a conservatory and a set of flower-beds be subjected to the worry of working up a stock of soft-textured plants from off-sets and cuttings, when the sowing of a pinch of seed will ensure to him all he can desire at a tenth part of the trouble, and with a greater degree of certainty.[111]

Propagating in this way was thus presented as efficient, inexpensive, and modern - even though it was the method by which cottagers had cultivated their gardens for centuries. Apart from the scale of its operation, the only value which Sutton's had added was 'scientific' control.

Among the first plants which Sutton's claimed to have improved were the 'Florist's Flowers' - those bred for competition whose intensive cultivation had, it was said, left them peculiarly enervated and depleted. This amounted to improvement in reverse as Sutton's was taking these flowers back to the state of nature in which they had once flourished. Florists' flowers had long been the subject of horticultural snobbery, primarily because of their associations, famously, with the 'mechanics' and other members of the industrial classes who traditionally cultivated and exhibited them

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[110]*Ibid.*, p. 202.

[111]Sutton, *Culture of Vegetables and Flowers*, 1884, p. 195.

competitively (figs. 7.5 and 7.6). After visiting Mr. Groom's 'Walworth Florist's Garden' in 1826, John Claudius Loudon had remarked dismissively that

> The purchasers of florists' flowers are quite a different class of persons from the purchasers of rare and curious species, or what, for the sake of distinction, we may call botanists' plants. They are chiefly tradesmen, and, in part, even operative manufacturers and mechanics. All these form a distinct group of flower-fanciers, and are as much occupied with the artificial properties and high sounding names of auriculas, tulips, and carnations, as botanists are with the generic and specific distinctions of science.[112]

Jane Loudon's *Practical Instructions in Gardening for Ladies*(1843), stressed that 'it must be remembered that florists' flowers are of course in a highly artificial state of cultivation from the extraordinary care bestowed on their cultivation'.[113] Forty years later Robinson's emphasis upon the artificiality of florists' flowers was more antagonistic:

> Thirty years ago the florists, like the late Mr. Glenny, who had the law in their own hands as regards the Dahlia, would have knocked a man on the head who had the audacity to dissent from their lumpy standard of beauty. It was really a standard of ugliness as so many of these "florists'" rules are.[114]

In 1840 an article 'On Flower Shows' contributed to Mrs. Loudon's *Ladies Magazine of Gardening* (1841) complained that 'in a few years, probably, the Dahlia mania, like the mania of the prize ring, will be destroyed by the very persons whose greatest interest it was to support it', and was submitted with the aim of exposing 'the folly of those amateurs who waste their time and money in a vain attempt to excel where they have very little chance of success.' The author of the article, himself 'an amateur of flowers' from Hammersmith, had nothing good to say about the culture of show flowers in general. 'These flowers, like the overgrown and bloated cattle exhibited at cattle-shows, are more calculated to surprise than to please.' He was similarly unimpressed by the culture of the florists themselves, although he would 'say nothing of the spirit of gambling which these contests engender, or the bad feelings likely to be excited by want of success, or of the envy, hatred, and jealousy, which the losing

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[112]*Gardener's Magazine*, 1, 1826, 349.

[113]Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies*, 1843, p. 319.

[114]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 185.

competitor is likely to feel towards his successful rivals; as these are obvious enough.'[115] Robinson blamed the state of florists' flowers not only on their competitive cultivation but also on their artificial representation in 'florists' periodicals':

> The kinds of Carnations popular up to the present day are well-known by what is seen at the Carnations shows, and in the florists' periodicals, like the *Floral Magazine*, *Harrison's Cabinet*, and, indeed, all similar periodicals up to our own day, when I began to insist that all flowers should be drawn as they are.[116]
>
> It was this want of artistic honesty that has left us so worthless a record in illustrated journals of the century, where the artist was always told to keep to the florist's "ideal" as to what the flower should be, and hence the number of plates of flowers of many kinds all "drawn" with the compass.[117]

Altogether, then, this distinct group of flower fanciers was accused of corrupting the essential nature of flowers through their obsession with artifice, their ignorance of both beauty and science and, finally, their own lack of good breeding. Sutton's looked back and congratulated itself on rescuing the florists' flowers of the 1840s and 50s from utter degeneration.

> Our commonest flowers have partaken of the improvement, of which the most striking examples are afforded by such flowers as the Astor, the Stock, the Phlox, and the Begonia; and we have but to look through the picture-books of thirty or forty years ago to become convinced that a splendid revolution has been accomplished.[118]

All sorts of plants, read the advertisements, would benefit by Sutton's modern methods of propagation, yet because the science and technology involved was invisible from the first sowing, and made the plants look 'natural' again, they escaped accusation of dallying with the 'black arts' of botanical 'meddling'.

Mrs T. Francis Foster's thoughts on garden design followed along similar lines as did John Ruskin, William Morris and William Robinson's. 'Did any poet,' she asked in *On the Art of Gardening* (1881), 'in England, ever feel moved, for instance, to write a poem about a calceolaria?' Instead of answering her question she announced

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[115]*Ladies Magazine of Gardening*, 1 (1), 1841, 15-16.

[116]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, pp. 198-199.

[117]*Ibid.*, p. 199.

[118]Sutton, *Culture of Vegetables and Flowers*, 1884, p. 194.

that 'We cannot help fancying that the gardener of the future, looking back upon the system of bedding out, will hold it to have been something very like the play of children.'[119] The subtitle of her book, 'a plea for English gardens of the future, with practical hints', indicated that she, like most gardeners who turned their hands to the history of their subject, had an agenda to direct the present and future courses of gardening as well as to record its past. But the driving thrust of Foster's 'Plea for English gardens' was for a return to the aesthetics of the imperial past and her book gave instructions for the making of a Chaucerian garden, a Shakespearean garden, and Tudor and Elizabethan gardens. Her period was imprecise, but the thesis was clear. These gardens were truly English not only because they contained 'native' species, 'sweet retired places for lilies of sorts or for roses or for specimens of all British flowers', they were truly English because, even when they harboured foreign plants, the dates at which these had been originally introduced were key moments in English political, military and cultural history. These plants, claimed Foster, were imported when England *and* its gardens were at their most beautiful, because the nation state was at its most powerful at home and abroad.[120] She concluded her book with lists of plants suitable for each of the gardens mentioned and, like other garden writers who advocated the use of hardy perennials (most of her recommended plants were in this category), Mrs. Foster appealed to her readers' economic as well as their aesthetic sense. 'One shilling would make a border very gay if expended on four threepenny packets of seeds, containing mixed Antirrhinum [snapdragon], Flos Jovis [flower of Jupiter], mixed Sweet William and Geum coccineum.'[121]

If her historical precision was inconsistent so too was her naming of plants. Using English names for plants went hand-in-hand with old-fashioned gardening, deliberately rejecting the titles bestowed by the botanist. William Cobbett had early railed against the use of dog Latin instead of Anglo Saxon in the garden, Ruskin and

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[119]Mrs. T. Francis Foster, *On the Art of Gardening*, (Satchell and Co., 1881), p. 24.

[120]Foster, *Art of Gardening*, 1881, p. 47.

[121]*Ibid.*, p. 91.

the 'naturalists' perpetuated the objection. Hibberd complained about 'weeds, labelled with hard names long enough to reach from here to the moon' and the 'pedants' who insisted upon using them,[122] while Robinson believed that, '[t]here is no more need to speak of plants in our gardens by their Latin names than to speak of the dove or of the rabbit by their Latin names, and where we introduce plants that have no good English names we must make them as well we may.'[123] Mrs. Foster, though confirming that 'we like, if possible, to call our flowers by English names', did not choose, or was not always able, to do so.[124] Unlike Robinson, however, she was not arrogant enough to invent them as she went along. His predilection for Anglo Saxon was ostensibly democratic in that 'the practice of using in conversation long Latin names, a growth of our own century, has done infinite harm to gardening in shutting out people who have a heart for a garden'.[125] Present day writers, however, have suggested that the reverse might be true, and that 'champions of old-fashioned flowers' may have 'sensed that the special languages spawned by various categories of [lower] middle-class flower cultivators were deleterious to their interests of achieving cultural dominance in the horticultural sphere.'[126]

It would seem that the mission to banish certain foreign species from the garden appears to have been successful in recreating the *idea* of a national garden, even where it met with the criterion halfway. The objection to foreign plants was informed as much from the methods of intensive cultivation then practised, and as such was a part of the

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[122]Hibberd, *Amateur's Flower Garden*, 1871, p. 103.

[123]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. iv.

[124]Foster, *Art of Gardening*, 1881, p. 28.

[125]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. iv.

[126]Michael Waters, *The Garden in Victorian Literature*, (Scholar Press, 1988), p. 132. This argument is still more plausible when considering lower middle-class garden instruction as opposed to garden fiction. *Gossip for the Garden* and the *Floral World* for example, both assume an extensive knowledge of botanical Latin on the part of their readers apparently incompatible with the social status and education. The reason probably lies in the tradition of Florists' Societies, Mechanics' Institutes and other artisanal organisations' provision of educational resources in towns and cities.

wider cultural rejection of technology. It is for this reason that the terms 'English' and 'natural' and 'cottage' gardening were interchangeable by the end of the century.

7.6. 'Garden-Craft Old & New'.

If as garden historian John Dixon Hunt suggests, '[s]ome of the most conspicuous examples of invented garden traditions will occur [...] when society undergoes rapid transformations,'[127] it was perhaps natural that Tudor and Elizabethan England would increasingly provide the model for redefining the national garden design. This was a period not only of supposed preindustrial social cohesion, it was also the very real era of imperial germination. However, just as fifteenth- and sixteenth-century society had welcomed exotic imports, so did society at the end of Victoria's reign. Published in 1891, J. D. Sedding's *Garden Craft Old & New*, elaborated upon this fact:

> The sixteenth century, which saw the English garden formulated, was a time for grand enterprises; indeed, to this period is ascribed the making of England. These gardens, then, are the handiwork of the makers of England, and should bear the marks of heroes.[128]

When H. E. Milner laid out the grounds for the Earl's Court Exhibition of 1892, he incorporated a Japanese garden, an Indian tea-garden, an Egyptian garden and a Roman garden. This was a standard practice learned from other exhibitions, private landscaping commissions and from his father, the late director of the Crystal Palace School of Gardening at Sydenham. But for the first time foreign representations were carefully tempered by historical examples of the native style: Milner had recreated a Georgian garden and a Jacobean garden. The star exhibit, however, was a model Tudor mansion planted in a garden of its own. When asked where was the modern Victorian garden, his answer carefully summed-up the horticultural imperialism of a century:

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[127]John Dixon Hunt, 'The Garden as Cultural Object', in *Denatured Visions, Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: MOMA, 1991), p. 19.

[128]John D. Sedding, *Garden Craft Old and New*, 1891, p. 93.

> We have our Victorian Age amply represented - not in a special garden to itself, but in the thousand and one evidences of floral beauty scattered over the exhibition generally.[129]

The English garden of the future would thus meld the nation's cultural heritage with its hard-won horticultural superiority, improving the plants of all nations for the spiritual benefit of all.

In 1892 a 'Shakespearean Garden' was created by Colonel J. J. Sexby, the first officer of the London County Council Parks Department, on the site of the old walled-garden of Brockwell Hall in the south-London suburb of Herne Hill. The Hall had been rebuilt in 1811-13 by D. R. Roper (architect of Grove Chapel, Camberwell Grove, 1819 and St. Mark's Church, Camberwell New Road, 1822) for John Blades, a wealthy glass manufacturer who bought the house and grounds in 1809. Although John Blades' interest in developing a plot of local land on the pattern of Nash's Regent's Park came to nothing, he did begin to develop the fringes of his own park and erected exclusive villas there in the 1830s. The walled garden was left intact, in spite of Blades rebuilding and improvements elsewhere about the Hall. By the 1880s the surrounding suburb was fast encroaching and, because the London County Council had had the forethought to set aside funds, Brockwell Park was opened to the public in 1892. Sexby's garden of the plants mentioned in Shakespeare was formally laid-out on the site of the Hall's appropriately (though unspecifically) ancient walled garden. This sheltered garden, with creeper-bound pergolas and mulberry trees, proved unexpectedly popular with the public. Amidst the great expanses of the park, laid out by J. B. Papworth about 1816, the domestic garden of 'old-fashioned' flowers, plants and trees must have seemed intimate and reassuringly protected to those inner-suburban dwellers not used to such wide expanses of turf. Despite garden historian Alicia Amherst's complaints about the inauthenticity of Colonel Sexby's planting plans he went on to create similarly-scaled revivalist gardens within other south-London municipal parks. He created rustic-work for the secluded garden within Peckham Rye

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[129] *Journal of Horticulture* (1892), in Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, 1986, p. 221.

Park and, with a nice touch of unintended irony, a rustic pergola and an old-fashioned bowling green for Ruskin Park, also in the great man's home suburb of Herne Hill. These became known affectionately as Sexby gardens; and the last to be created was the Ada Salter Garden (1936) in Southwark Park.[130] Old-fashioned, domestic gardens were leading the way as the national symbol even in the nation's great public parks. Everywhere one looked in the parks of suburban London, with their Shakespearean gardens, Drake-inspired bowling greens and historically inspired mazes and arbours - not to mention their thousands of black-and-white Tudor tea-houses, park lodges and cricket pavilions - were little examples of the reforged English landscape, the homes and gardens of the second English Renaissance.

7.7. 'The Glory of the Garden'.

> In this memorable week of heat, August, 1909, when the last Test Match is being played, and the thermometer is at 82 degrees in the shade in the City, how glad I am to have this little spot to cherish and enjoy [...] I have simply tried to show you how a little Old-World Garden has been made, and exists, so close to the heart of the greatest and busiest city in the world.[131]

So wrote the artist G. Hillyard Swinstead from his suburban garden at Kidderpore Avenue, Hampstead, where he and his family liked to 'sit in the sunshine or the shade, have tea, read, paint, play clock golf or laze in the long summer evenings'. In his memoirs of Grove Park, James Kenward remembered the fathers sitting in deckchairs admiring their suburban gardens during 'the great days of suburbia, viz. during the decade and a half between the end of the South African war and the beginning of the First World War.'[132] 'Suburbia was,' he said, 'a state of civilization in the sense that "civil" opposes "military"'.[133] Many more gardens were

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[130]See Hazel Conway, *Public Parks*, (Princes Risborough, Bucks: Shire Publications, 1996), p. 72; Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, 1986, p. 230; and Weinreb and Hibbert, *London Encyclopaedia*, 1993, pp. 97, 117, 434.

[131]G. Hillyard Swinstead, *The Story of My Old World Garden and How I Made it in a London Suburb*, 1910, pp. 49-50.

[132]James Kenward, *The Suburban Child*, (CUP, 1955), p. 60.

[133]Kenward, *Suburban Child*, p. 106.

made while 'their owners [would] await long for them to become quaint and old-fashioned' in the years before 1914. Still more appeared in gardening books, in prose and in poetry. Altogether these images conspired to construct a garden which was at once homely and domestic yet popularly acknowledged as representing the nation at large. It was this image which would be remembered by soldiers fighting abroad, and physically cultivated by some of them in the trenches.[134] Ultimately, it was this model of landscape, planned and planted by Gertrude Jekyll, which the War Graves Commission adopted for that corner of a foreign field which is forever England. 'Common trees of the field, cottage flowers and wildings were the symbols with which she chose to remember the English dead'.[135] After the Armistice she maintained her faith in the restorative powers of garden and woodland work for the ex-serviceman, believing that '[a]s his hands harden so his thoughts will sweeten'.[136]

Although garden writers had long exhibited a tendency for reflection on their subject, there was a specific valedictory tone to horticultural journalism published in the period between the Boer Wars, the end of the century, the death of the Queen, and 1914. The English garden was championed as both a symbol of the nation's internal social and political order and a product of its hard-won peace. Kipling famously employed the garden as a metaphor for England in his *Glory of the Garden* (1911). In this powerfully simple piece of patriotism for schools Kipling conjured a landscape where the order and beauty of its surface was invisibly supported by layers of backbreaking graft, for the glory of 'every one'.[137] The following year, Madeleine Agar's ostensibly didactic *Garden Design in Theory and Practice* (1912) included rousing passages to show how the British love of gardening 'corroborates our character' because 'the love of gardening is distinctly a national trait, which long freedom from internal warfare has given opportunity to

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[134]See Mandy S. Morris, *Home and Garden: Gender, Landscape and English Culture 1880-1930*, Unpublished PhD thesis, (University of Nottingham, 1994).

[135]Sally Festing, *Gertrude Jekyll*, (Viking, 1991), pp. 227-228.

[136]Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 230.

[137]Rudyard Kipling, 'The Glory of the Garden', in Kipling and C. R. L. Fletcher, *A School History of England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), pp. 249-250.

develop.'[138] Agar believed that this national trait was manifested by country people from time immemorial. Likewise, the well-known rock and alpine gardener Reginald Farrer believed that 'England as a whole has evolved a very living and moving garden art of her own'. Reviewing the International Horticultural Exhibition at Chelsea of 1912, Farrer was appropriately patriotic: 'One had but to walk round the International Show to realize that [...] horticulture [is] the most waving plume in England's national crown.'[139] Gardens, then, could represent Nation through the incorporation or exclusion of individual species and in the manner of their cultivation, through particular arrangements and, finally, through the prevalent idea that gardening was a distinctly national virtue, the cultivation of which would be of benefit to the country as a whole.

Reflecting on the past century of English gardening in 1914, the compiler of *The Horticultural Record* concluded happily that 'Mr. Robinson smashed the Victorian garden beyond repair'. But at the same time he conceded that

> Every vicarage lawn must have its beds, starfish shaped, circles or diamonds, arranged in concentric circles of Lobelia, Calceolaria, and Pelargonium. Nor is this tradition even yet quite out of mind, for at the International [Horticultural Exhibition of 1912] I saw, especially, one small rock-garden whose creators had adorned the grass in front of it with a little cutlet-shaped bed containing four Lobelia plants and a Geum in the middle.[140]

This 'combination of scarlet Geranium, [yellow] Calceolaria, and blue Lobelia' laid out in intricately designed beds of the manner suggested above were,[141] with the 'pretentious piles of rickety stone' passing as rock-work Robinson's particular *betes noirs*.[142] Some contemporary writing, like Sybil Cust's *From a Little Town-Garden* (1910), did dare to contradict his widely touted opinions. Published originally in the

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[138]Madeleine Agar, *Garden Design in Theory and Practice*, 1912, p. 112.

[139]Reginald Cory, (ed.), *The Horticultural Record*, (J. and A. Churchill, 1914), p. 10.

[140]*Ibid.*, p. 9. The *Record* served as both a retrospective catalogue and review of the International Horticultural Exhibition of 1912.

[141]Gertrude Jekyll, 'Colour in the Flower Garden', in Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 290.

[142]Robinson, *English Flower Garden*, 1899, p. 147.

Woman's Supplement of *The Guardian*, this began with a defence of suburban garden culture.

> Those who own large and beautiful gardens, with all things needful for them that money can buy, can perhaps scarcely realise the full joys of a little roadside town-garden, poor of soil, overshadowed by one's neighbour's trees, and bounded by the humble privet hedge abhorred of Mr. Robinson.[143]

A friend and neighbour of the novelist Mrs. Oliphant, Sybil Cust, lived in one of twelve early Victorian villas in an old-fashioned crescent on the skirts of Windsor, within a half-hour of London by train. Her sloping garden was complete with 'a few homely things that do not need description'. But amid the old-fashioned 'mignonette and pansies, and the roses even' she had dared to break with conventional good taste.

> I must give special praise to the geraniums, if only because it has become the thing to despise them. Nowadays it has become no unusual thing for people to boast that they have not one geranium in their garden. "In the front gardens of very small villas," says a scornful writer in *The Times*, "geraniums are still associated with gentility, and grown for that reason, not because they are beautiful. They are as insipid [...] as Greco-Roman sculpture;" and the writer goes on to draw an elaborate analogy between the romantic and the classical ideals of beauty.[144]

Sybil Cust recognised this as the usual form of horticultural snobbery dressed up as aesthetic truth. 'The cause of this unkind feeling towards geraniums is not, I think, so far to seek: it simply lies in their amicable nature that puts up with anything'.[145] This of course was the reason for both their suburban ubiquity and their rejection by those who preferred to think themselves more exclusive.

The last word on this subject goes to Mary Hampden whose *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener* (1915), began by damning the 'vast amount of nonsense - disheartening nonsense too - [which] is talked about small gardens by critics'. Like most gardening books written during the war years, Hampden's had a valedictory tone. Yet, even as she complained how earlier 'writers of the press sneered at tablecloth lawns, pocket-handkerchief flower-beds, and ribbon-wide borders', she looked to the

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[143]Sybil Cust, *From a Little Town-Garden*, (Smith, Elder & Co., 1910), p. 3.

[144]Cust, *From a Little Town-Garden*, 1910, p. 12.

[145]*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

future: 'something of a democratic spirit has stirred since then, not persuading us that shut-away gardens of loneliness are not delicious luxuries for the few, but making us ashamed to despise our roadside chances [...] on limited canvases of ground.'[146] By 1918 the Pre-Robinsonian style of gardening had been greatly simplified even in the grander public gardens for economic reasons as well as aesthetic taste. There was neither the will nor the money for such ostentatiously labour-intensive and costly designs; there was also a distinct lack of men to undertake the necessary labour. Even when the depression lifted, bedding never scaled the decorative heights of its Victorian era. The influence of garden reformers was increasingly pervasive so that beds and borders and other parts of the garden were increasingly informalised.

Along with other aspects of Victorian material culture, the 'bedding craze' was recorded by the next generation's gardeners with horrified awe. In the wake of the deaths of both Robinson and Jekyll, one regular correspondent of the *Gardener's Chronicle* reflected upon the 'pre-Robinsonian' garden in 1935.[147] Mr. Bunyard (1878-1939), a nurseryman from Maidstone,[148] reviewed the 'rise of carpet bedding' in gardening literature published between 1830 and 1870. He proposed that its appalling taste

> was due to the great influx of new garden owners, enriched by industry, or nabobs of India, who started gardens mainly around London. The owners of villas at Putney or Chiswick, say, left their gardens to their gardeners and so the taste shown was of a primitive order.

Bunyard proceeded to credit Ruskin with educating the new rich, 'as no-one can read his Proserpine without seeing in it a germ for a love of plant characters and nature's detail.'[149] Eleanour Sinclair Rohde's *The Story of the Garden* (1932) complained about the 'ugly

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[146]Hampden, *Every Woman Her Own Flower Gardener*, 1915, p. 2.

[147]Ironically, the *Gardener's Chronicle* was partly founded , in 1841, by Joseph Paxton who excelled at this sort of gardening. The other founders were Professor John Lindley (then assistant Secretary to the Horticultural Society of London), and Bradley (the publisher of Punch).

[148]Edward Arthur Bunyard's career as a pioneer geneticist and fruit breeder apparently did not conflict with his passion for old-fashioned roses. These he sought out, classified and published in his *Old Garden Roses* of 1936.

[149]*Gardener's Chronicle*, 1935, 258.

beds' and 'curious beds' or floral baskets favoured by the Victorians, and we have seen in Chapter Four how 'Loudon observed gravely that this sort of gardening may appeal to persons in remote districts, to residents in the colonies "and to infant and female gardeners"'.[150] These 'residents in the colonies' shared the same status as Mr. Bunyard's 'nabobs of India who started gardens around London'; although they are white and (newly) wealthy, these men have literally and morally been coloured by their prolonged contact with 'abroad' in the torrid zone. The 'closeness' of both natives and climate was believed to promote sexual and moral licentiousness. Three years later in 1938, the landscape architect Christopher Tunnard published his Modernist manifesto *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*. This book begins with a history which delights in ridiculing the Victorian period of gardening, summarised as 'O glorious epoch when Hindu and Italian contribute equally to the national style!'[151] Tunnard deplored what he perceived as the infantilism displayed by popular Victorian horticultural taste:

> at first those plants which were brightest were considered best, much as the gaudiest toys are cherished in the nursery. Until their novelty wore off, geraniums, calceolarias and lobelias, representing the most vivid tones of the three primaries, were the favourite subjects.[152]

Although it is understandable that the generation succeeding 'the Victorians' should have rejected the horticulture taste of their immediate antecedents, it is perhaps surprising that the modernist sympathies which informed this rejection continue in large measure today. As an American surveying two centuries of garden history remarked only recently,

> Given the nature of bedding out at its peak of popularity, it is easy to see why most historians of gardening tend to leap, as if embarrassed, straight from the great landscape designers of the eighteenth century (such as William Kent and 'Capability' Brown) to Robinson, whose 1883 book the *English Flower Garden* first set forth many principles of the modern style.[153]

The sort of snobbery which underpins and perpetuates the reading of English garden history related by Charles Elliott is, unhappily, nowadays directed towards lower

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[150]Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, *The Story of the Garden*, (Medici Society, 1932), p. 227.

[151]Christopher Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, (Architectural Press, 1938), p. 53.

[152]Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, 1938, pp. 54-55.

[153]Charles Elliott, *The Transplanted Gardener*, (1995; Viking, 1996), pp. 164-165.

middle-class and 'suburban' gardens, wherever they may be cultivated. However, as we have seen for the whole of the nineteenth century, the louder and more arch does that criticism become, the more we know that its object - the ordinary suburban garden, with its bedding, rockeries, winding or rule-straight paths, close-mown turf, conifers, and general air of permanence and continuity - continues to flourish happily in the neighbourhoods of England's cities, towns and villages.

8. Home Landscapes: Gardening and the Making of Identity

This thesis has presented the ordinary, suburban, domestic garden as a site of complex social activity. The garden, gardener and the garden itself were infused with many layers of identity and meaning; as Stuart Wrede and William Howard Adams have written, 'how we shape our physical environement is a fundamental reflection of our culture'.[1] These layers had not the consistency of solidified strata of rock but, rather, the more plastic - and less stable - texture of soils at the earth's surface. The suburban garden was at once shaped by and instrumental in the shaping of those who worked and played in it. In Jeanne Kay's terminology the domestic garden was a 'locus for relationships',[2] a place where men, women, and children might 'place themselves in a contingent position defined in relation to friends and neighbours'[3] as well as to each other.

The prologue to this thesis charted the evolution of a suburb in what is now a district of South London. Camberwell's particular historical geography was instrumental in creating both its inhabitants' sense of their position in the world, and their sense of the distictive identity of their locality. Proximity and distance to the City and Westminster on the one hand, and to the green hills of Surrey, on the other, contributed to its popularity with a diverse selection of suburban migrants, but most notably British Protestant Nonconformists and their fellow Protestant refugees from northern Europe. The growth and prosperity of Camberwell after 1815, its substantial houses, improved thoroughfares, and impressive places of worship which were largely the product of this group's patronage, conferred upon the area a salubrious quality which remained a part of Camberwell's sense of place long after these classes had passed on or away.

Negative factors have had a powerful role in the formation of identities. Those created in reaction to the disapproval and dismissal of others are frequently more potent than identities created by positive or proactive forces. Suburban or middle-class identities,

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[1]Stuart Wrede and William Howard Adams, (eds.), *Denatured Visions, Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: MOMA, 1991), n.p.

[2]Jeanne Kay, quoted in Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 112-113.

[3]Susan Ford, quoted in Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 1993, p. 112.

if we can so call them, have sometimes been created in this way. Chapter Two's review of the secondary literature relating to the presence and absence of the suburban home and garden from modern critical study, revealed how historical prejudices against the suburb and the suburban continue today. We must be wary, therefore, of confusing actual nineteenth-century suburban identities with those inspired by their historians' recasting. Suburban middle-class identities were never homogeneous, and frequently contradictory or Janus-faced, and this was manifest in the contested landscapes of the domestic garden.

Chapter Four discussed the creation in the popular imagination of the suburb as well as of suburban identities. It illustrated that both were born from fear of changing social and political relationships, especially as they appeared in the landscape. Particular forms of landscape arrangement were thus the target for the sharpened quills of social and political commentators; William Cobbett was not called 'Porcupine' for nothing. The 'catalogue of errors' style of criticism, which appeared, as we have seen, in books and magazines and pamphlets, was the literary equivalent to the South Kensington Museum's exhibition of False Principles of design for the home and body in the 1840s. Like this exhibition (satirised by Dickens as the 'House of Horrors' in *Household Words*), the 'How Not to Lay Out a Small Garden' variety of literature helped forge a collective identity of popular gardening in opposition to the garden design 'establishment'. Readers of these books, like many visitors to the South Kensington Museum, saw themselves and their environments reflected too closely for comfort.

Chapter Five's focus on the personal and familial identities at work at the very core of the garden and its making, suggested a more positive, yet nuanced, relationship between the garden and gardeners' constructions of themselves. Through its necessary and often pleasurable connections with the horticultural media, the nursery trade, horticultural societies, and public winter-gardens and flower-shows, the domestic garden was opened to exchanges of information, ideas, and materials. It thus played a pivotal role in the cultivation of collective identities. This garden expanded the horizons of those looking out from the domestic interior. The forging of positive collective or communal links, both imaginary and material, with outside worlds could be a counter-balance to the negative and

reactive senses of suburban middle-class identity discussed in Chapter Four. Discriminating consumption, assiduous production as well as domestic pleasure and creativity, all contributed to the making of a positive and worldly self-identity.

The garden also needs to be understood as a site where national and imperial identities were imagined, practised and contested. The process of constructing an imperial identity for subjects at home in their garden was the focus of Chapter Six. With its exotic associations, the Victorian garden allowed for imaginative travel beyond the boundaries of home, in both its senses of household and nation state. Hot colours, unfamiliar scents all conspired to concoct a heady sense of other worlds. So important to the Victorian imagination, imperial identities forged at home owed a large part of their potency to their very intangibility. The late-nineteenth century saw a shift in gardening (or at least in certain prescriptive or didactic gardening literature) towards a largely invented tradition of Englishness. This discourse about the garden mirrored other forms of imperial propaganda in the period. Expressions of horticultural imperial bombast were no longer an appropriate form of patriotism for the home environment, being reserved instead for great public spectacles at South Kensington, Sydenham and other crystal palaces of high imperial exhibition and ambition. In the domestic garden (or at least in the larger sorts dug by those who advocated the new old-English model of gardening) exotic and other alien plants were to be made to conform to the indigenous method of culture, and allowed to grow in apparently unfettered profusion rather than in ranks which highlighted their difference. Exotic identities were to be forcibly assimilated into the national domestic landscape. Diggers of 'ordinary' gardens, however, merely incorporated some of the new Old-English style alongside their favourite bedders. Whether or not the lower and middle middle-class preference for this style of gardening in its suburban plots was linked to a greater patriotism is not recorded, although the clerkly classes made up a disproportionately large number of recruits for the Boer Wars in the 1890s. Howsoever it was constructed, national identity was increasingly painted as English in the literature serving the London suburban middle classes at the turn of the century. The fact that this regenerated English identity celebrated its imperial past only served to strengthen the idea that the nation's identity was inseparable

from its history. Representations of the English garden from the late-nineteenth century to the beginning of the First World War increasingly focused on preservation, conservatism and continuity, promoting national unity through the idea of rootedness in a decreasingly less green and pleasant land.

Gardening itself helped forge these components of national identity, while also connecting with other aspects like athleticism, health and the cult of the body beautiful. Unlike other comparable middle-class pastimes with unificatory possibilities such as sport, gardening claimed to nurture the spiritual and higher aesthetic sensibilities. Most of all, gardening permitted the cultivation of one's artistic side without fear of rebuke for expressing aestheticism or effetery. Like the new forms of middle-class lawn sports, gardening was also an amateur activity; but unlike respectable sport, it was ancient and rooted. As one gardener wrote on the eve of the First World War,

> The garden as you make it is the gathering place of past years, and in it the seasons and the nations meet. But, after all, although a garden may hold in it what belongs to the past, it is made for the future.[4]

It was the garden's potential for connecting with the past and anticipating the future with hope, which made it such an important site in the negotiation of family identities. The domestic garden was not only a space for group family activity, although it might certainly be this (figs. 8.1-8.5), but a family space where individuals could explore both the extent of the garden and of the self. Whether represented in advertisements, cartoons, family photographs, gardening books, or greetings cards, images of the garden, the gardener, and gardening published between 1815-1914 were recognised, often unconsciously, for their role in the cultivation of familial, domestic and personal identities.

If, as Gaston Bachelard wrote in 1958, a 'house consitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability',[5] so too does a garden. It is also a 'vital space' where 'we take root, day after day, in a "corner of the world."'[6] In this thesis I have sought to give voice to suburban gardeners and their gardens, and to others who

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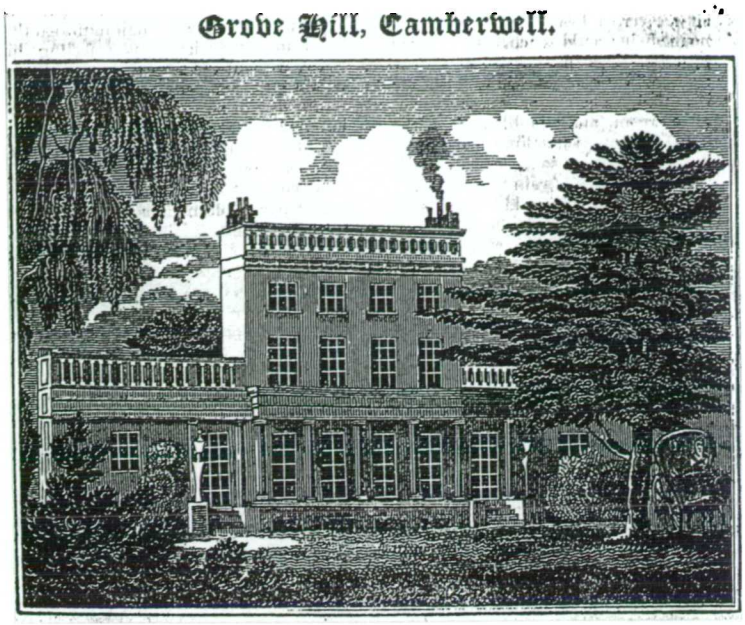
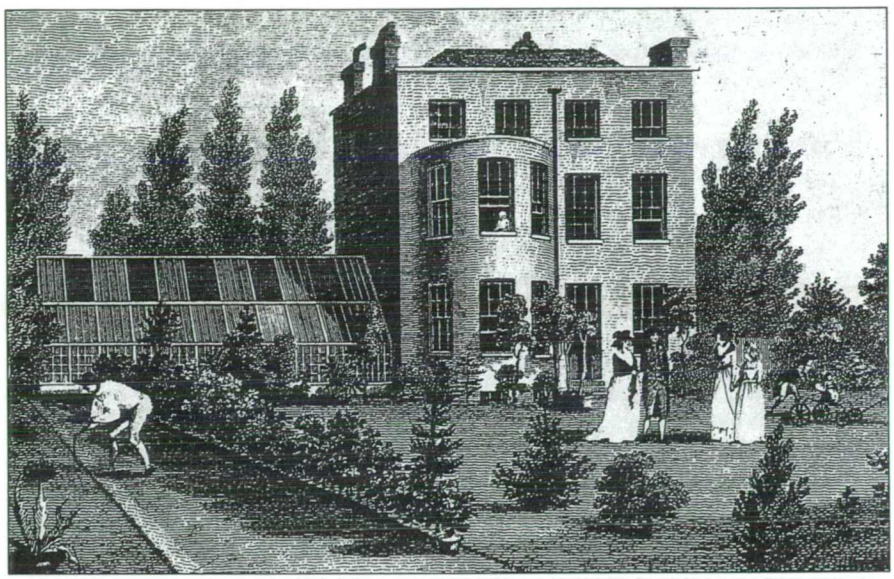
[4]C. B. Purdom, *The Garden City*, (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1913), p. 107.

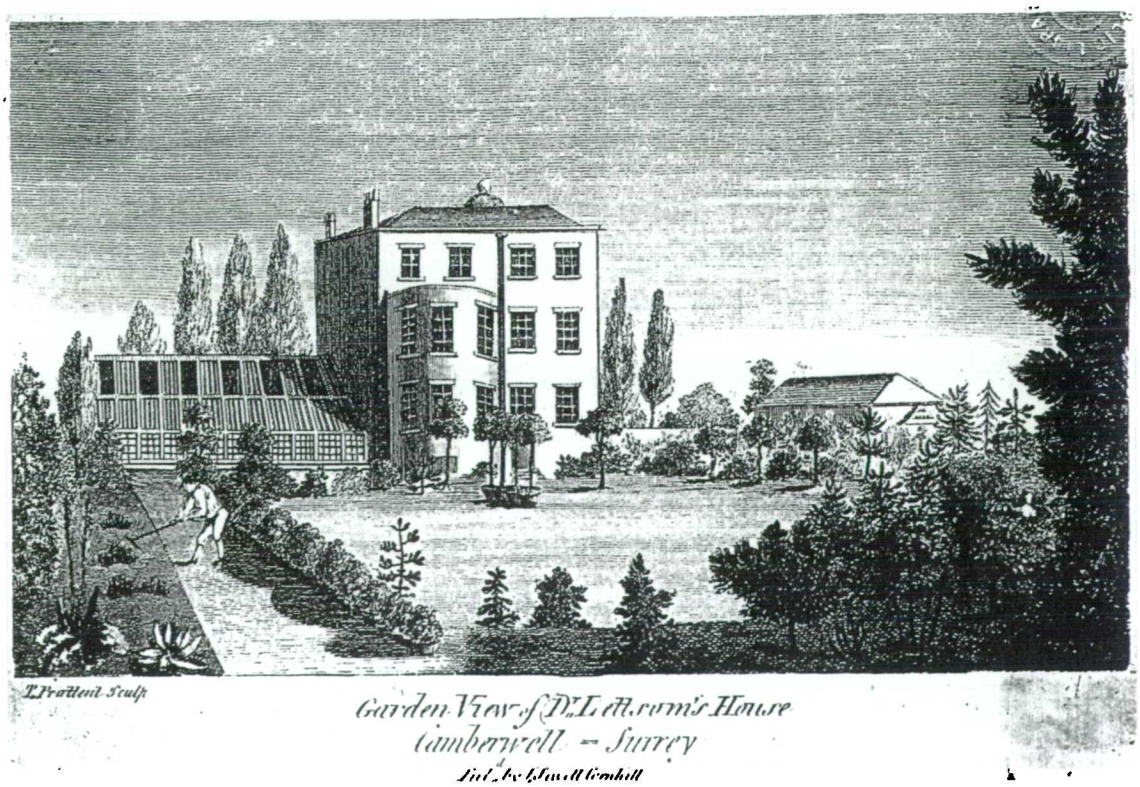
[5]Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, (1958; USA: Beacon Paperback, 1969), p. 17.

[6]Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 1969, p. 4.

moved in them and were moved by them. The images, ideas and material realities of gardening gave suburban men, women, and children their proofs of stability in the changing economic, social and cultural climate of their times.







Figs. 1.1, 2, & 3. Grove Hill Villa, front c.1800, and back views, c.1817. (Lambeth Archives).

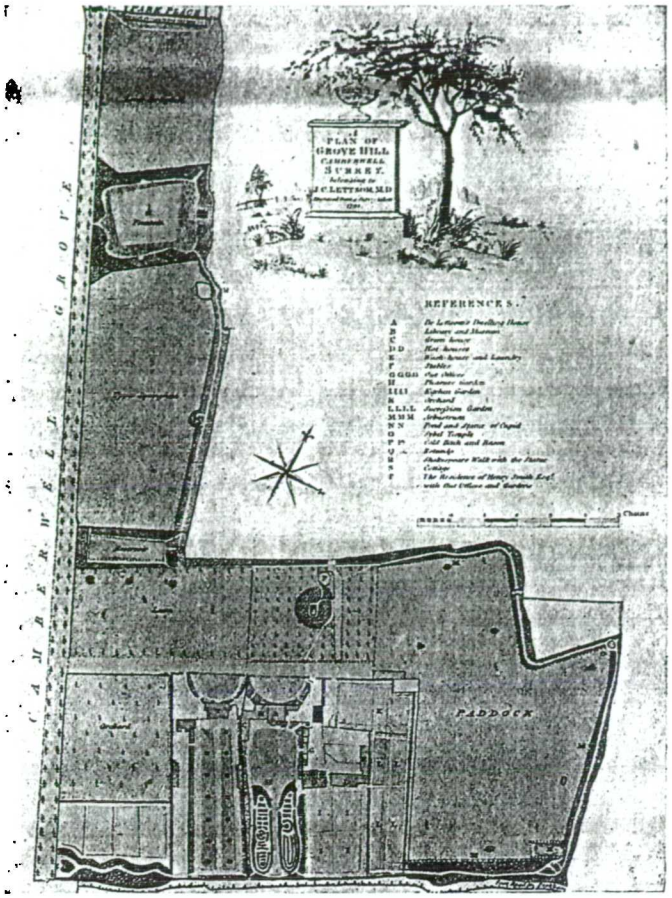


FIG. 4.—A Plan of Grove Hill, Camberwell, Surrey, belonging to J. C. Lettsom, M.D. Engraved from a survey taken in 1792, and published on September 1st, 1793, by J. Edwards, Betchworth, Surry. (From a print in the possession of the Medical Society.)

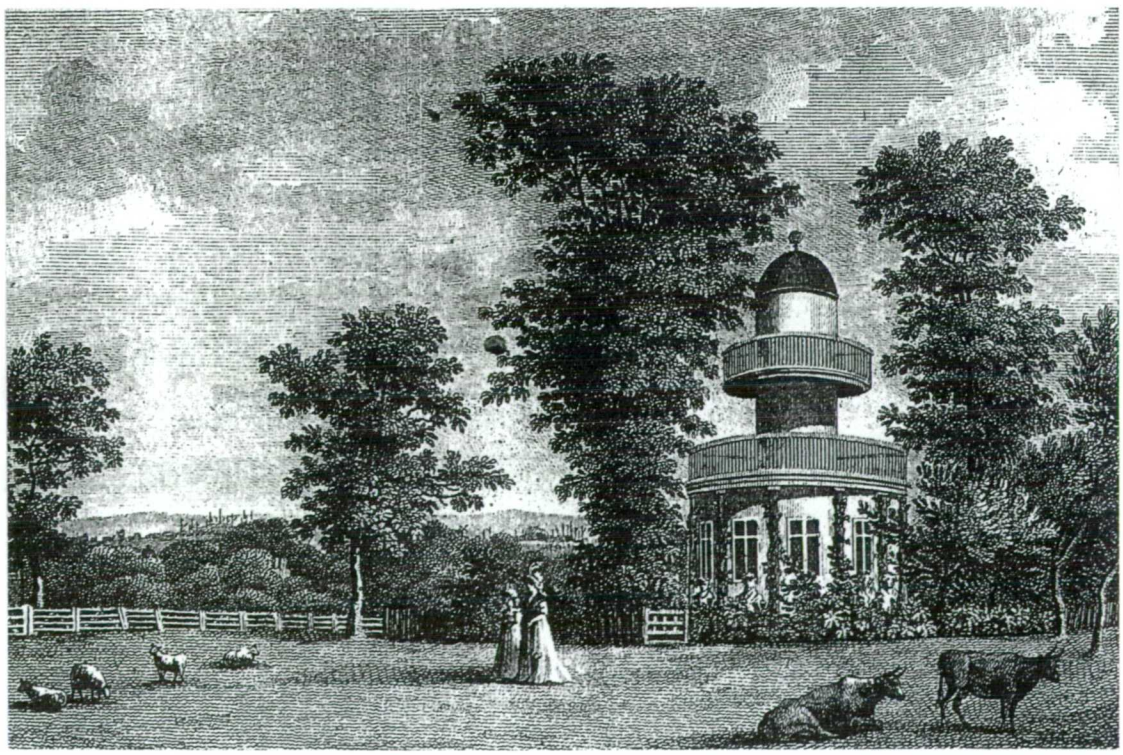
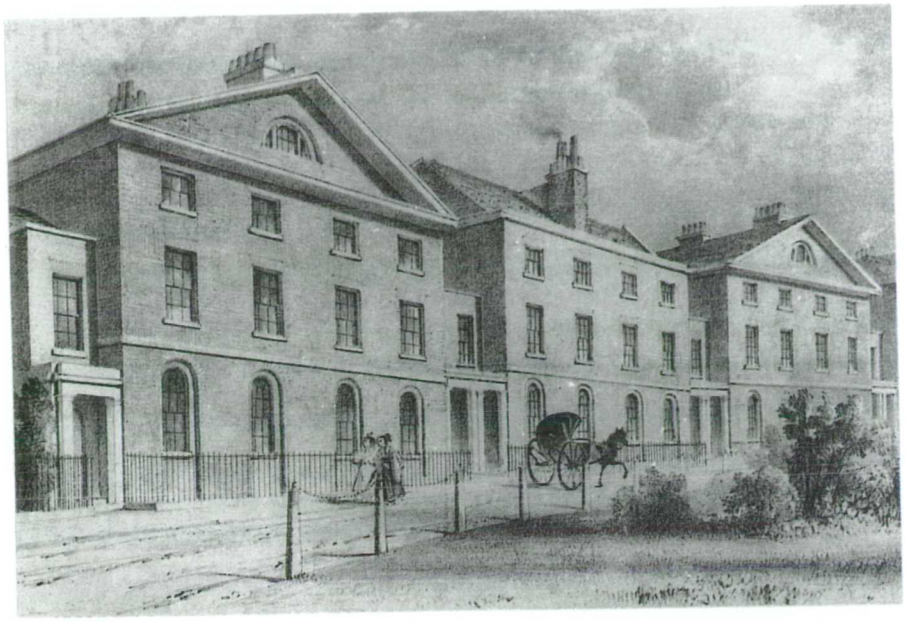
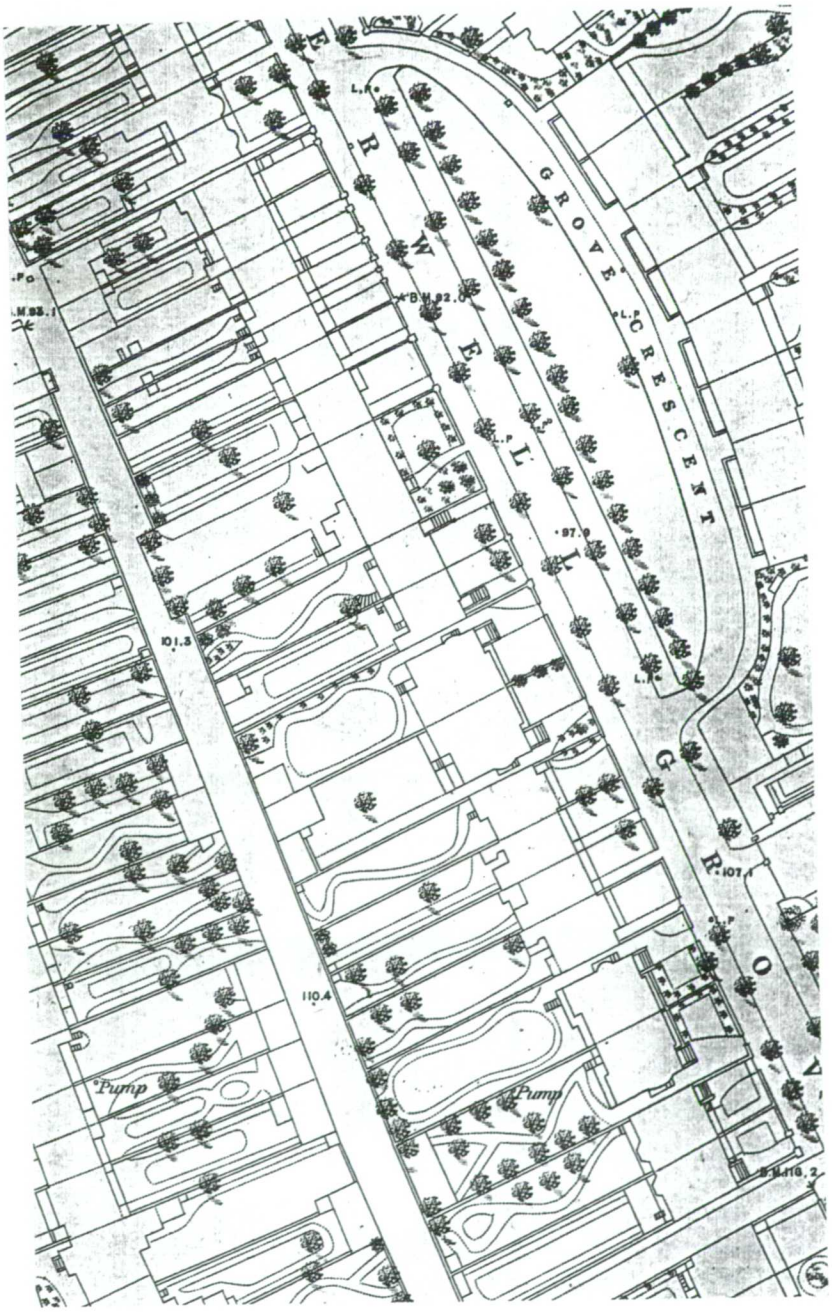


Fig. 1.4. Plan of Grove Hill, Surrey, 1793.
Fig. 1.5. Temple of the Sybils, overlooking Lambeth chimneys. (Lambeth Archives)





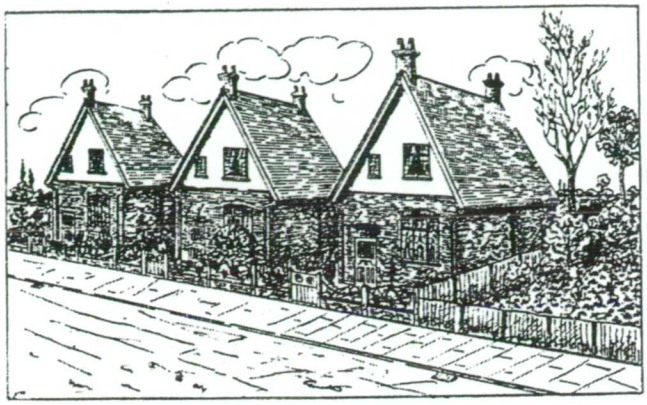
Figs. 1.6 & 1.7. Grove Crescent, Camberwell:
Sale catalogue, 1836, and map (5 feet to a mile), c. 1850. (Southwark Archives).

Figs. 1.8 & 1.9. Grove Vale Estate. Advertisement, 1905, and Ordnance Survey, 1914

A Small Detached Villa

with Side Entrance for Car or Motor Cycle.

THE IDEAL HOUSE FOR MOTORISTS.



Splendid Gardens Back and Front.

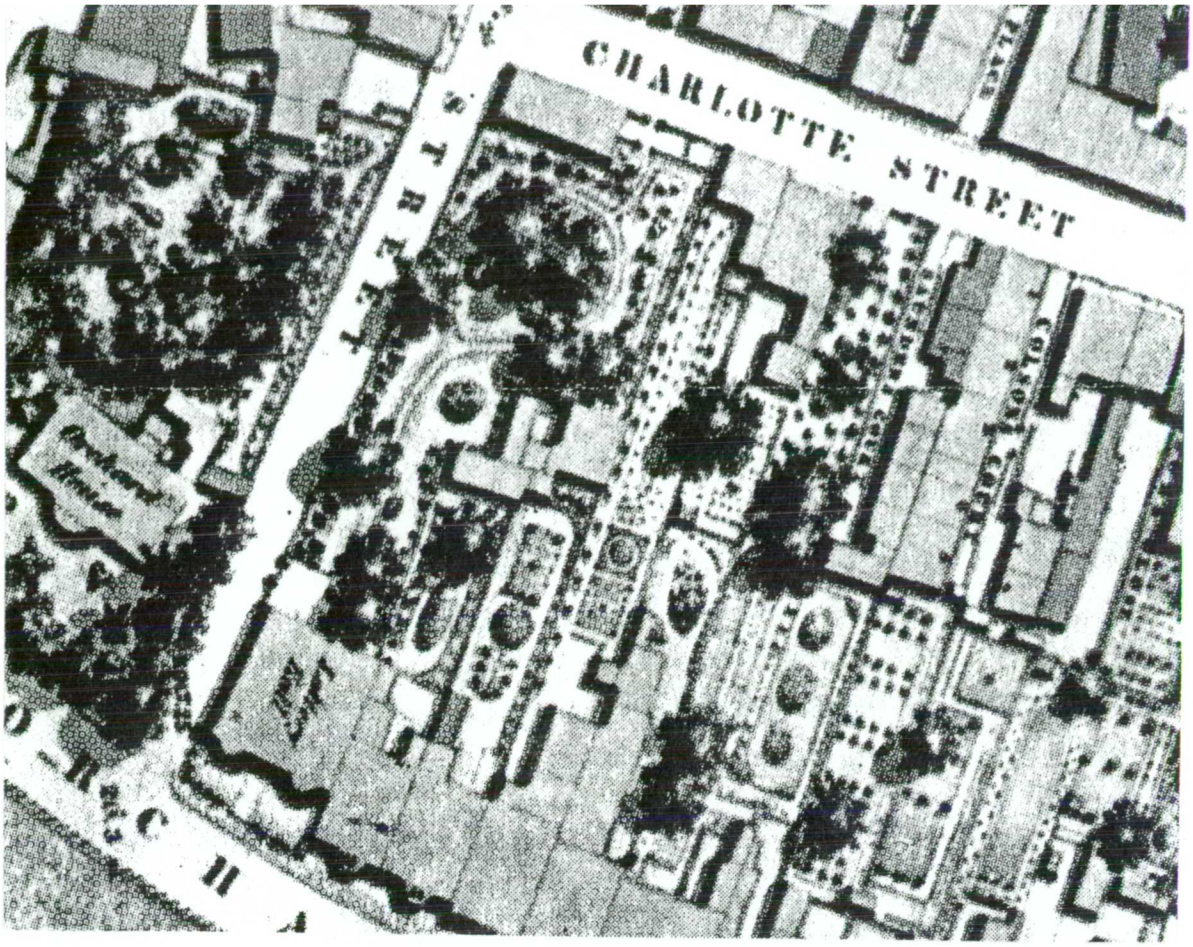
Situated within Three Minutes of Wembley Station L. & N. W. Rly. and Electric Trams, and Twelve Minutes of Alperton Station, District Railway.

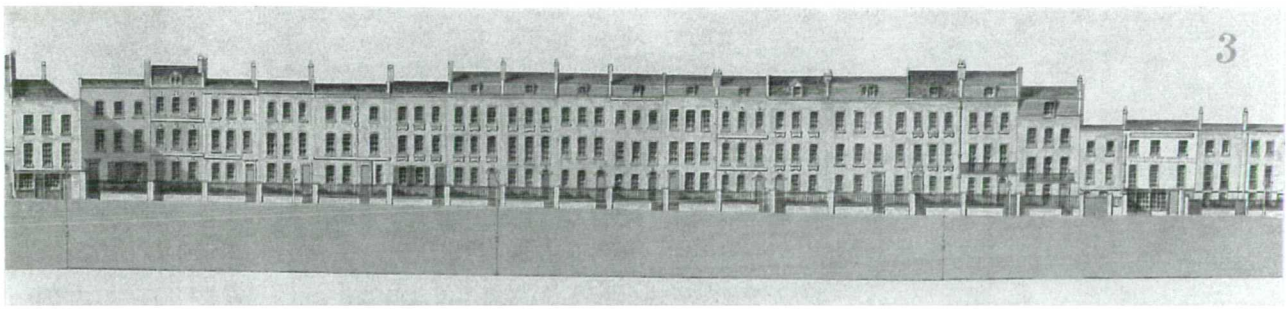
Musgrove, Builder, Wembley.

ROSES AND FLOWER BORDERS ROUND ABOUT THE HOUSE

Fig. 1.10. Builder's advertisement, 1911 (Brent Archives)

Fig. 1.11. H. H. Thomas, *Gardening Planning and Planting*, Cassell & Co., 1912.





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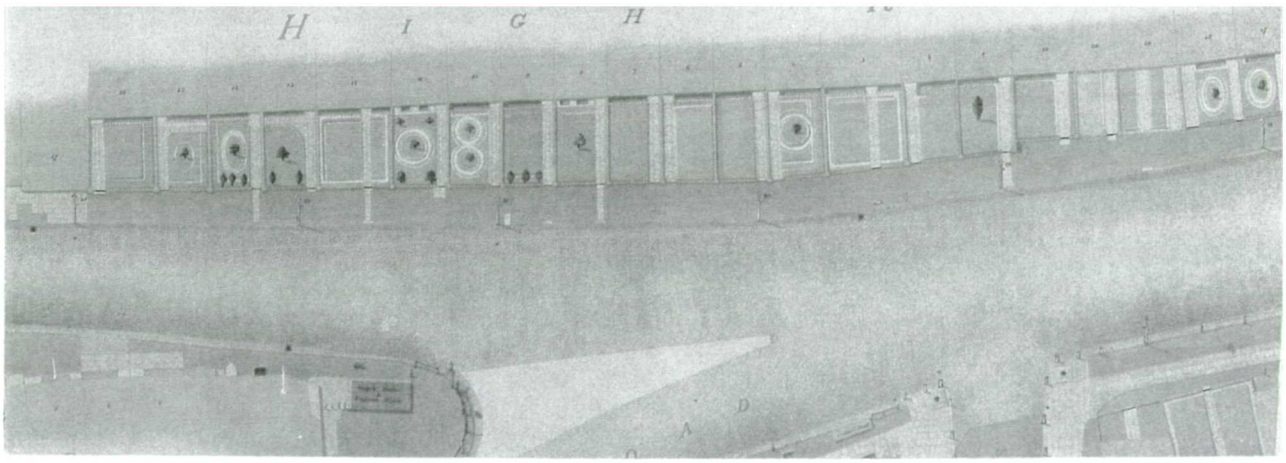
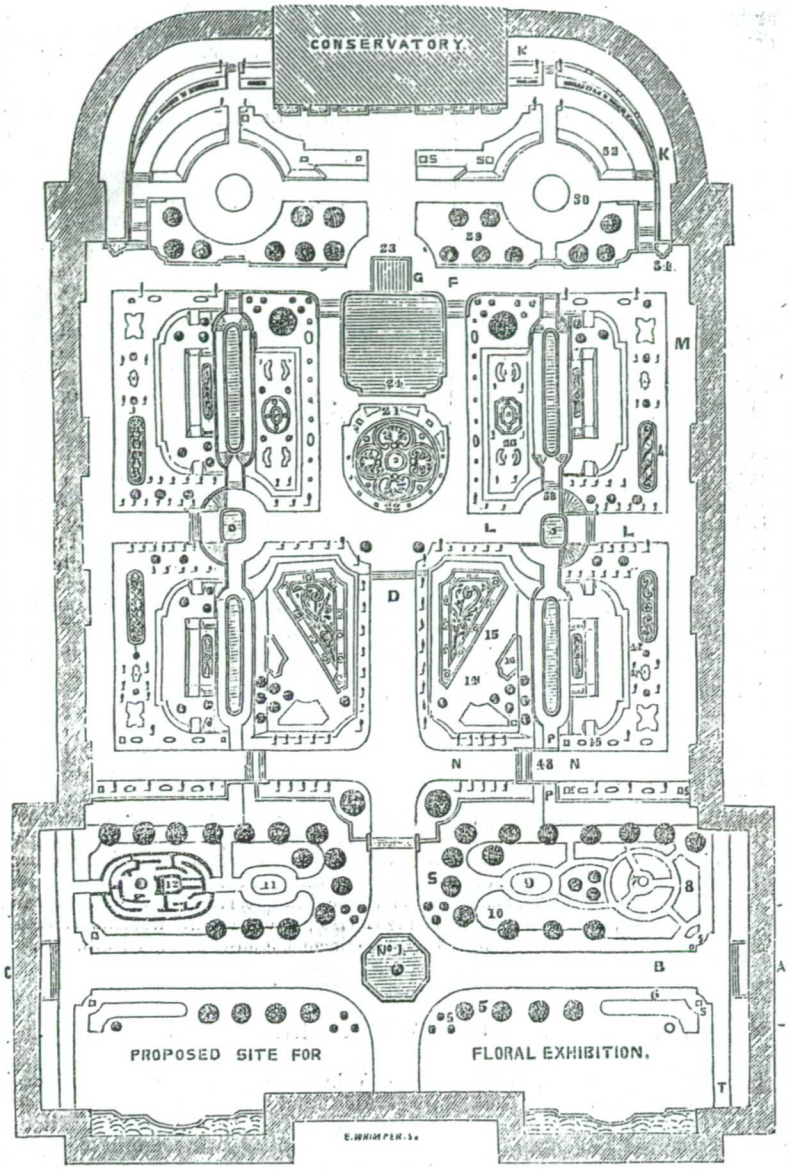
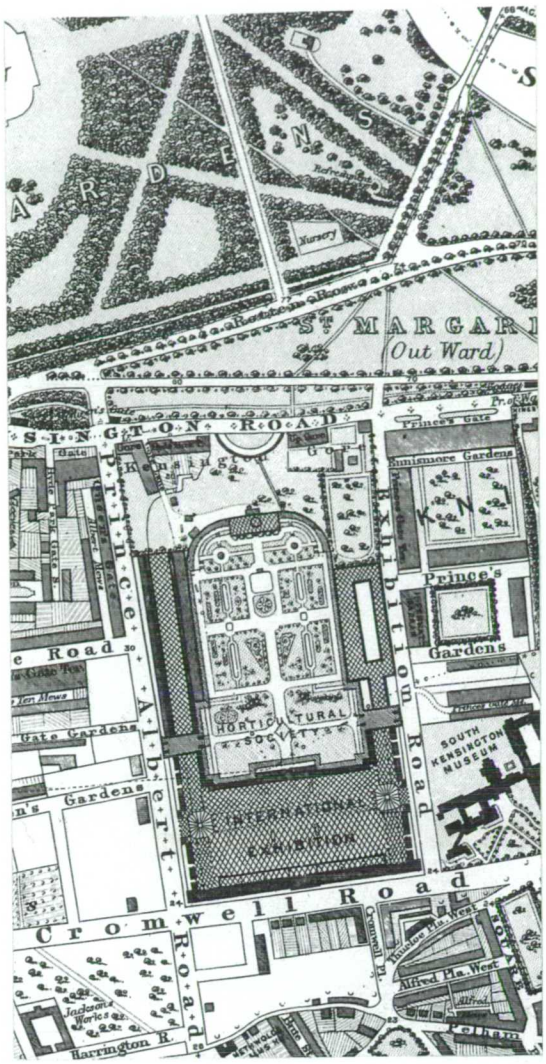


Fig. 3.1 1848 *Plan of Southampton*, (1: 528)
Fig. 3.2 Joseph Salway's *Plan of the Road from Hyde Park Corner to Counter's Bridge*, London, 1811. (Longstaffe-Gowan, *Gardening and the Middle Classes*, 1990).



HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.



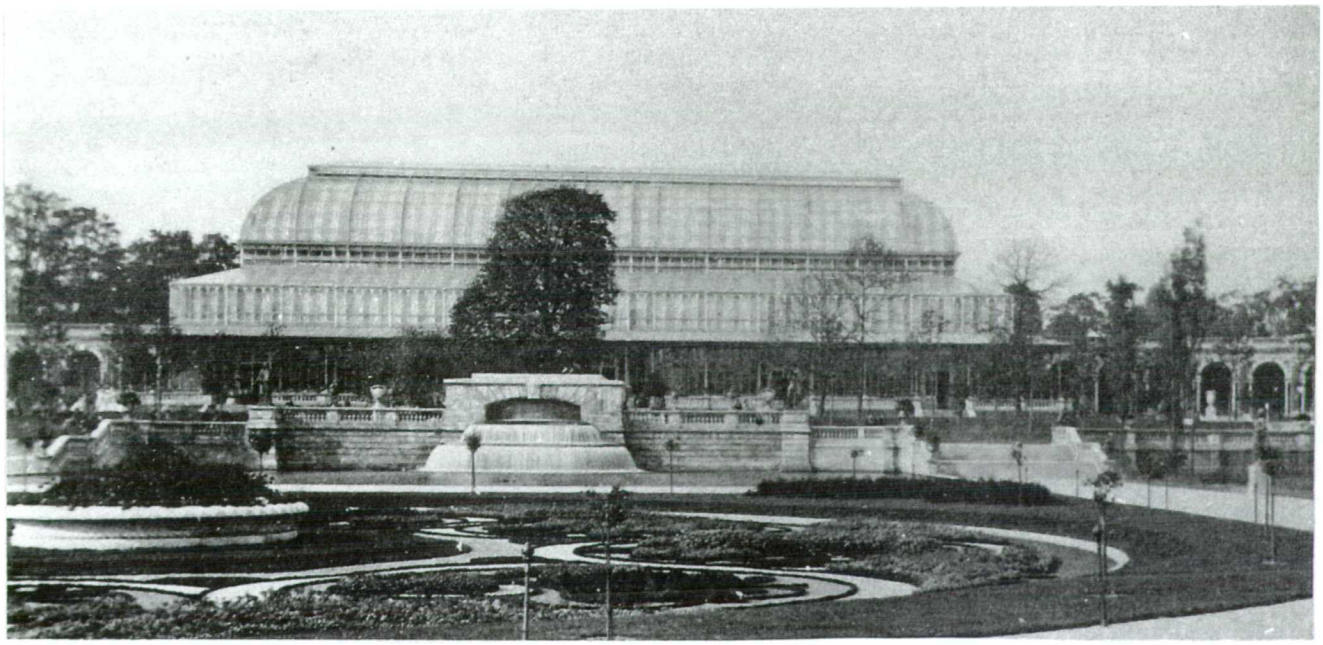


Fig. 3.3 Ground plan of the Horticultural Society's Gardens, (Floral World, 4, 1861)
Fig. 3.4 Stanford's Library Map, 1862.
Fig. 3.5 The conservatory and Nesfield's geometric garden (Murray, *Book of the Royal Horticultural Society*, 1863).

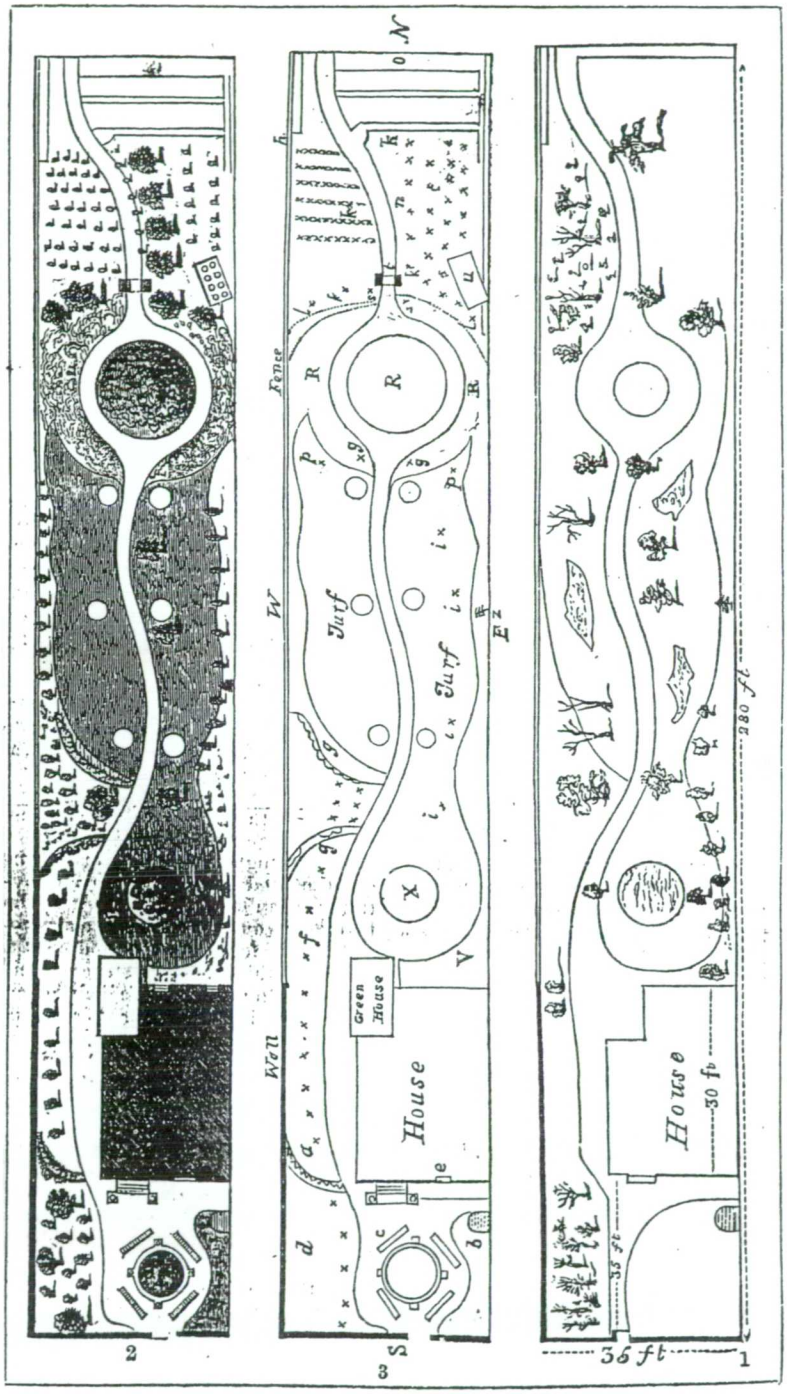
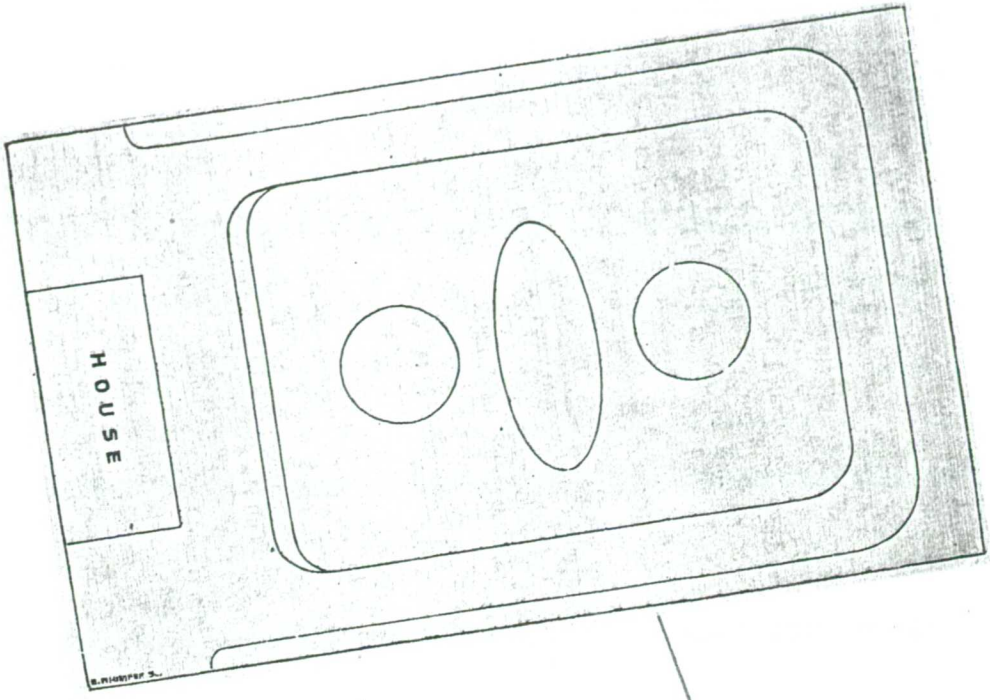


Fig. 3.6 Lordship Terrace, Stoke Newington,
'Plan of a Town Garden by Shirley Hibberd', *Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858.



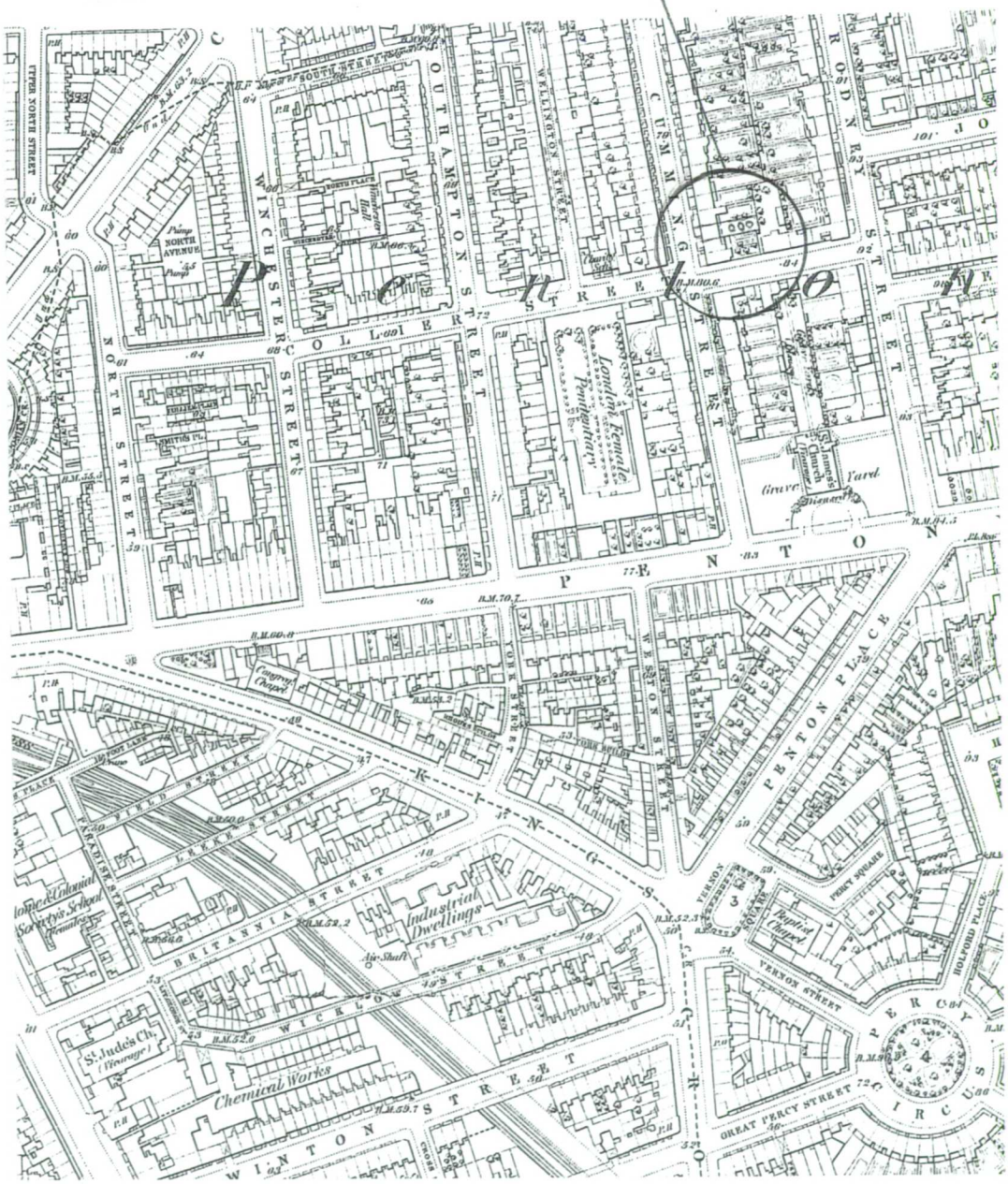
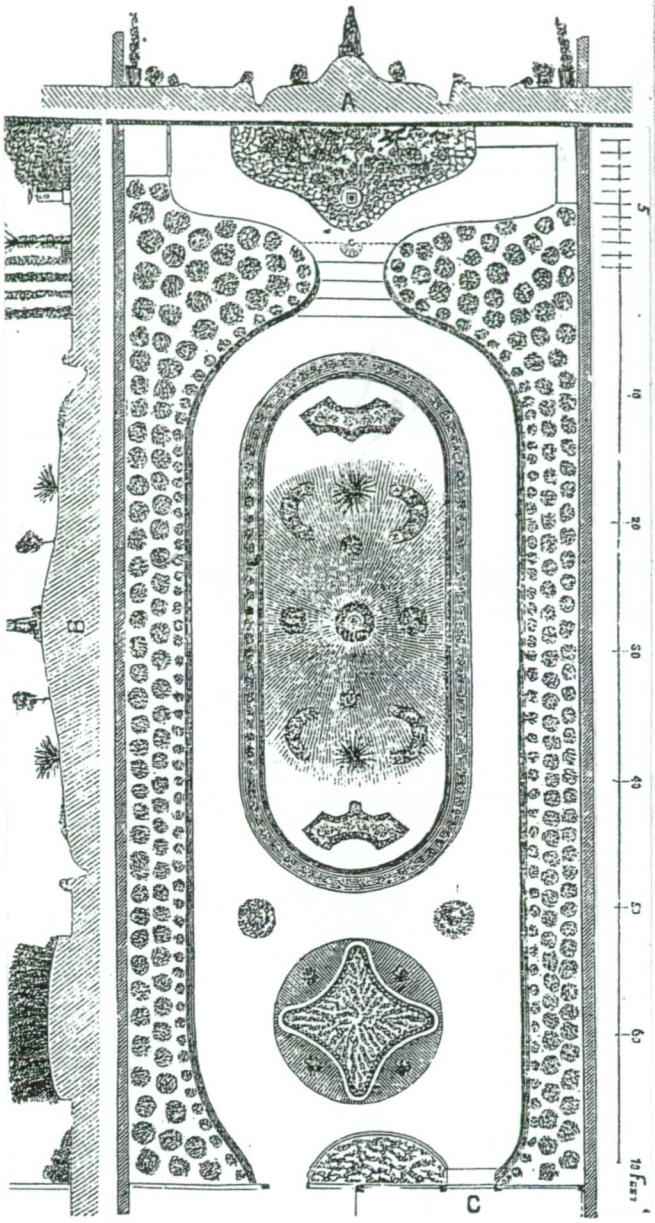
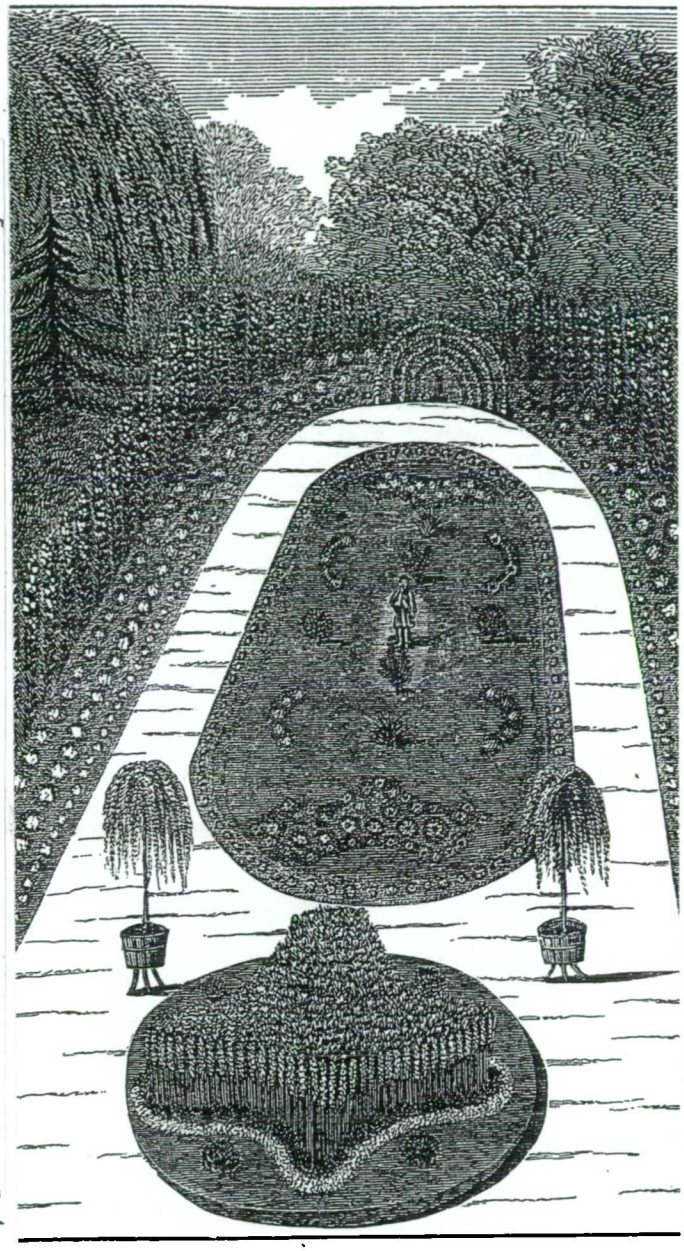


Fig. 3.7 'Plan of a town garden', at 42, Cumming Street, Pentonville. (Hibberd, *The Town Garden*, 1859)
Fig. 3.8 Ordnance Survey of Clerkenwell, King's Cross & the Angel, 1871, (about 15 inches to 1 mile).



GROUND PLAN AND CROSS SECTIONS OF THE GARDEN OF JAMES CRUTE TUFNEL PARK.



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE GARDEN OF JAMES CRUTE, ESQ., TUFNEL PARK

Fig. 3.9 The garden of James Crute, Esq., Tufnell Park. *Floral World*, 1 (12), 1866.

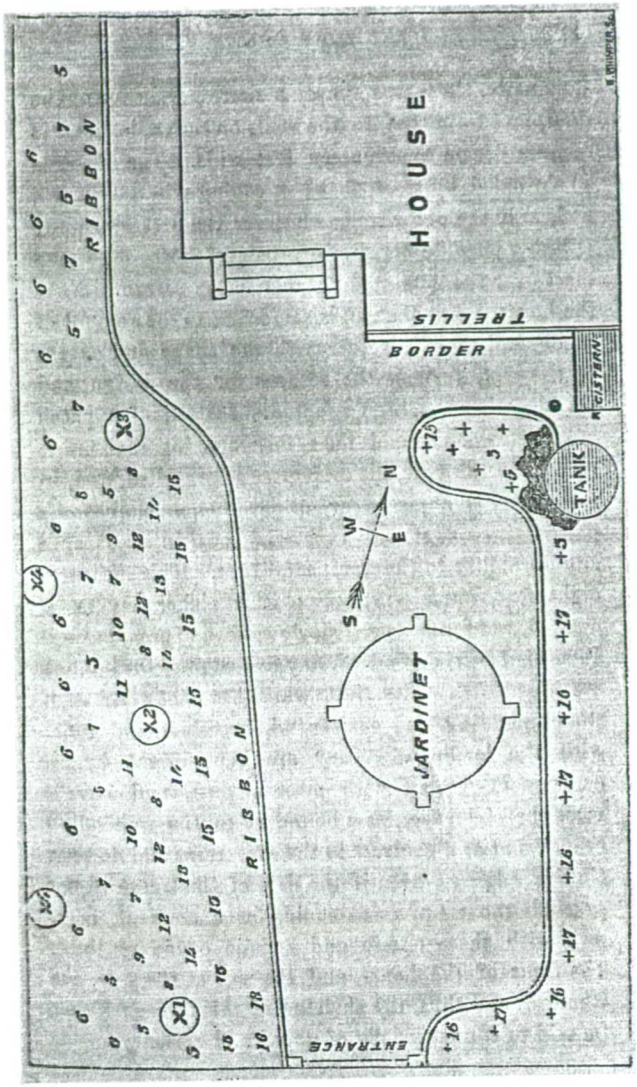
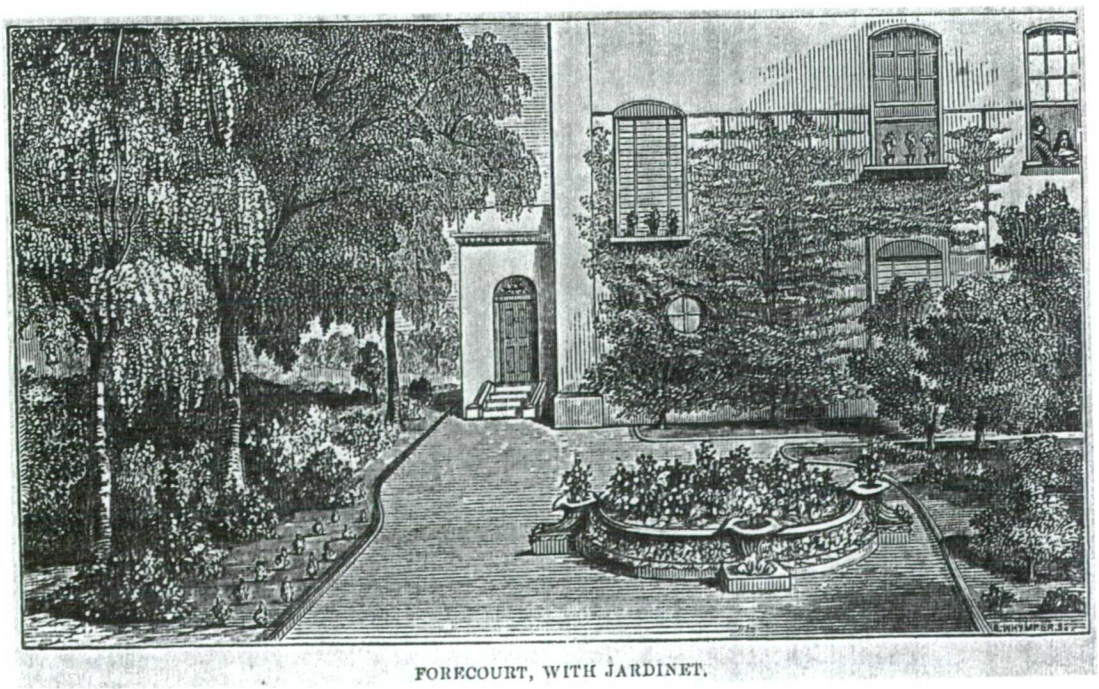
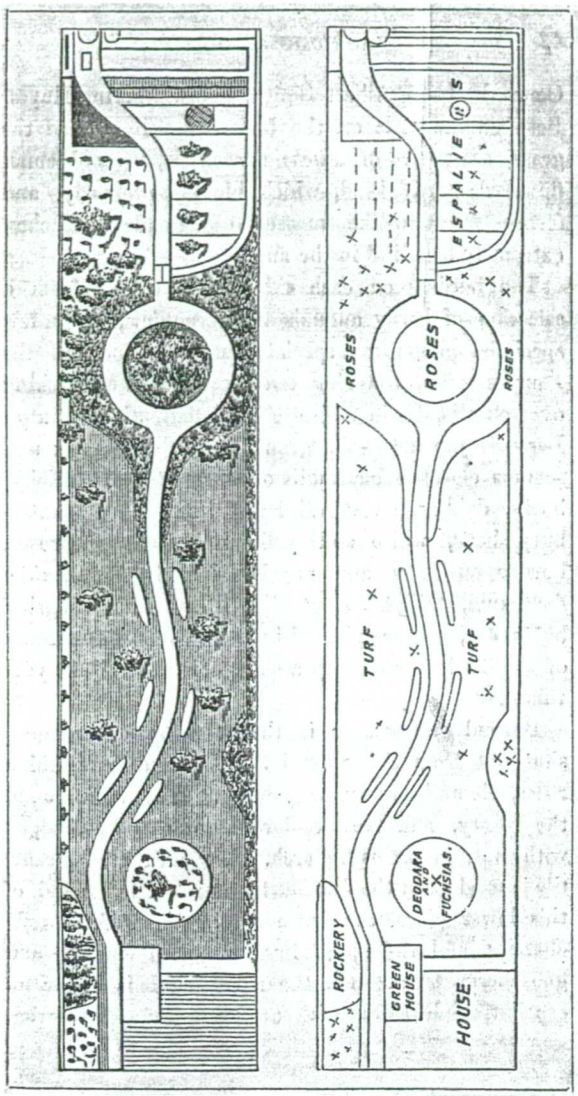


Fig. 3.10 Lordship Terrace, Stoke Newington,
'Plan of a Town Garden by Shirley Hibberd', *Floral World*, 1 (1), 1858.



Figs. 3.11 Lordship Terrace, Stoke Newington, Hibberd, *The Town Garden*, 1859. James and Sarah Hibberd are shown in the top right hand window surveying their forecourt. The much advertised *Jardinet* was manufactured by the Ipswich Quaker agricultural engineers, Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies.

Fig. 3.12 Ordnance Surveys of Stoke Newington,
1868 (inset) and 1871, (about 15 inches to 1 mile).



Figs. 3.13 Ground plan of a town garden,
(Stoke Newington): rear view, Hibberd, ***The Town Garden***, 1859.

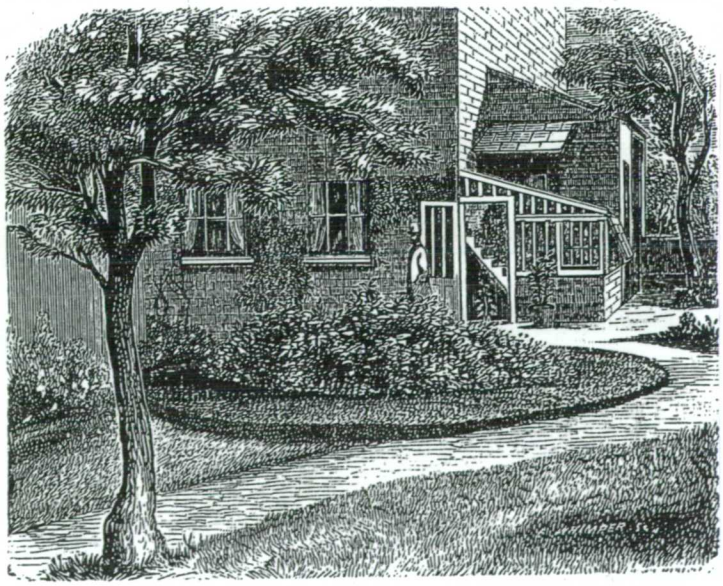


Fig. 3.13 'A bed for the drawing-room windows', Stoke Newington. ***Floral World***, 1 (11), 1866.

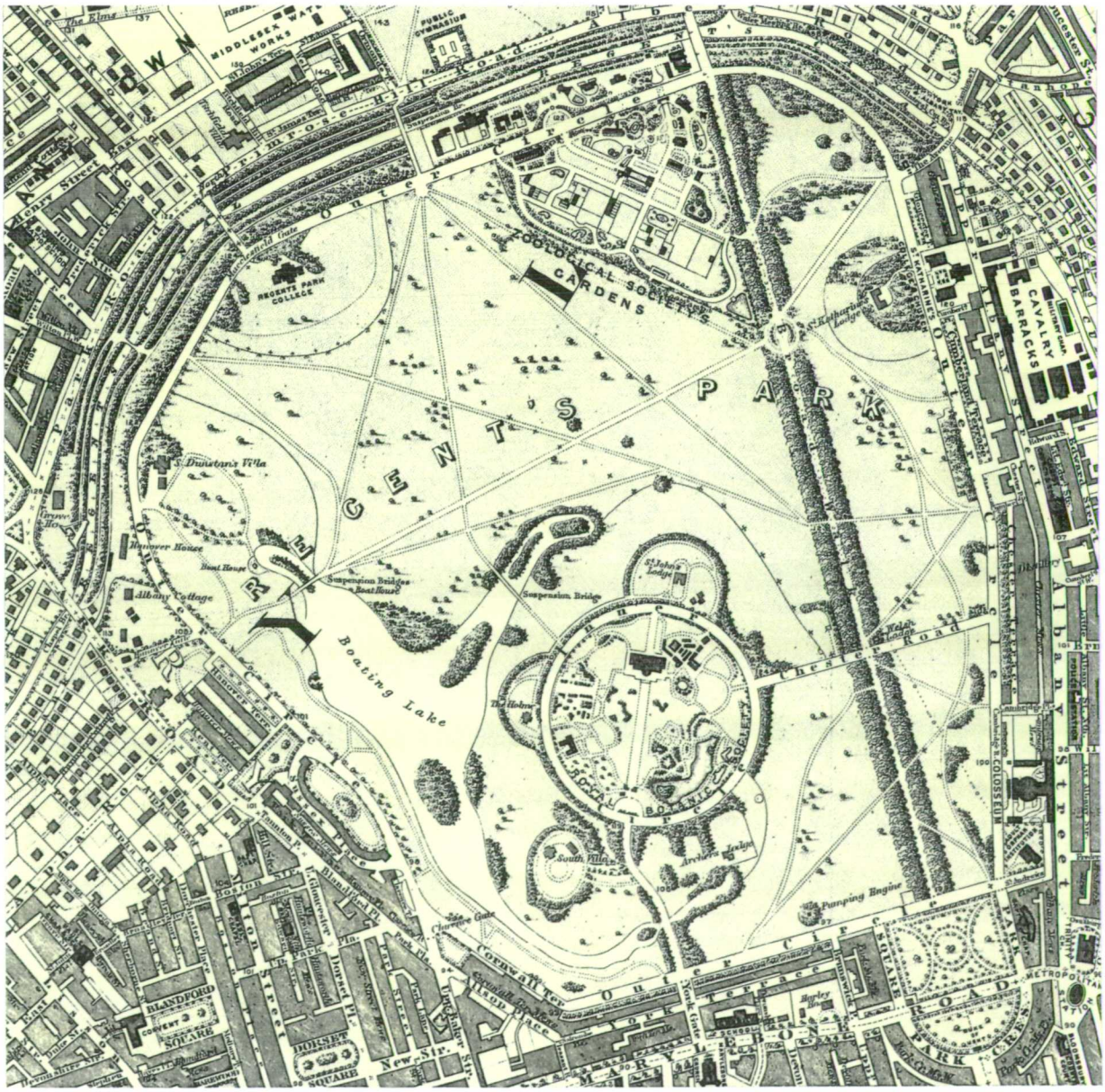
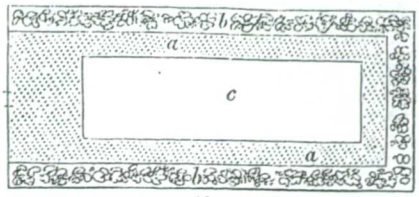


Fig. 3.14 *Mary, in the Regent's Park*, 1851, Charles Collins, (Tate Gallery).
Fig. 3.15 Regent's Park, *Stanford's Library Map*, 1862.



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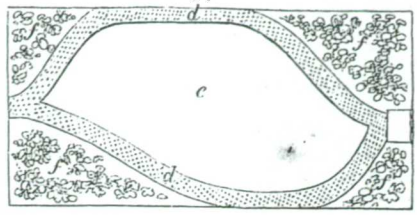
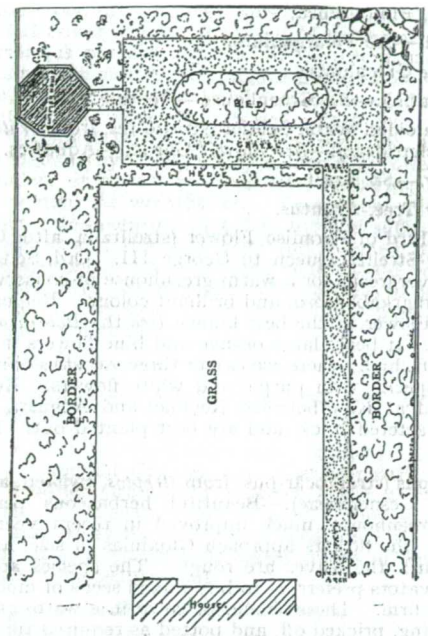
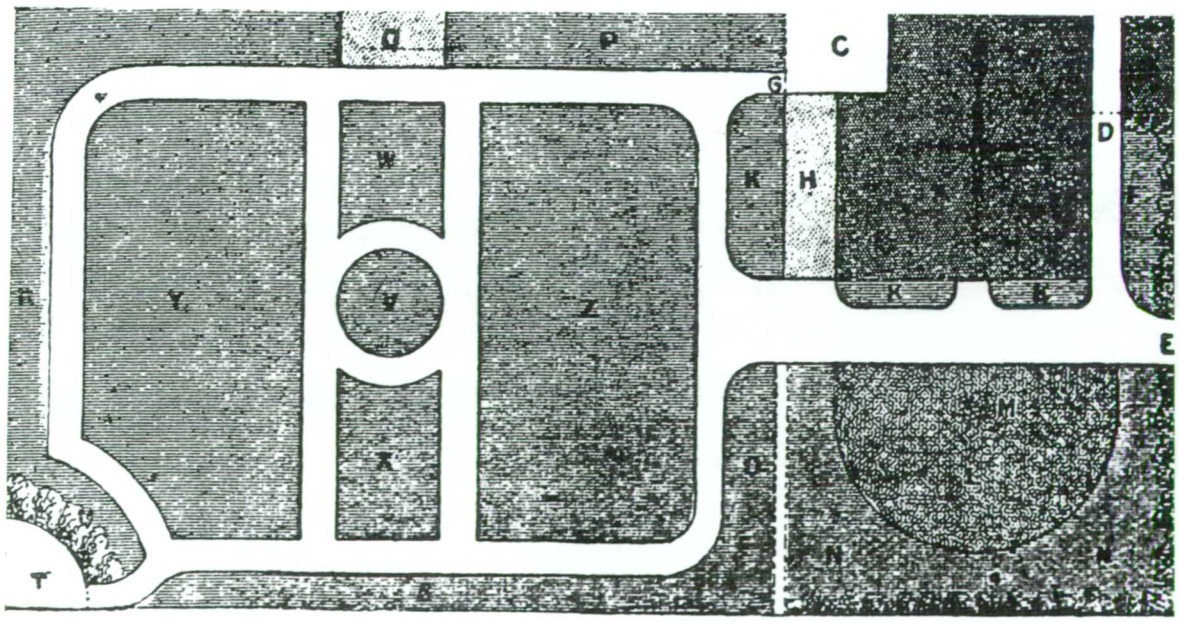




A DESIGN FOR A RECTANGULAR SUBURBAN BACK GARDEN.

The design provides: A central grass plot; a side path with arches at each end; two flower borders; creepers on the fences; an end section with flower bed, gravel, summer-house, rockery, and shrubs.



PLAN SHOWING ARRANGEMENT OF GARDEN FOR COTTAGE OR VILLA.

Plans for town, cottage and villa gardens.
Fig. 3·16 'The management of a town garden', *Gardener'sMagazine*, 1831.
Fig. 3·17 Walter p. Wright, *Everyman's Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, 1911.
Fig. 3·18 *Beeton's Shilling Gardening*, c.1880.

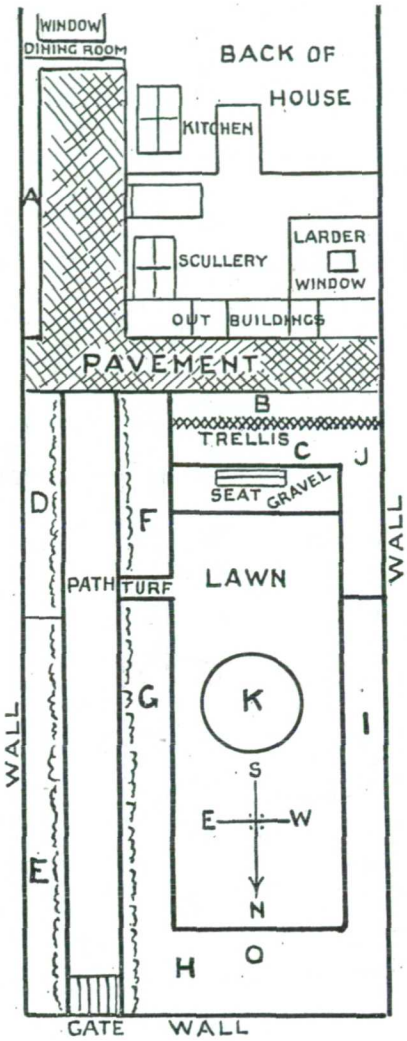


FIG. 4.—DESIGN FOR SUBURBAN GARDEN

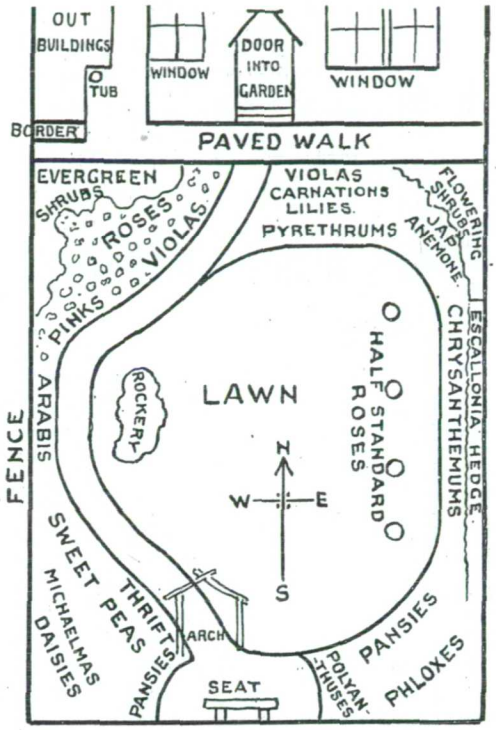


FIG. 3.—DESIGN FOR SUBURBAN GARDEN

Figs. 3·19 Two designs for commonly-shaped suburban gardens, H. H. Thomas, *Garden Planning and Planting*, Cassell & Co., 1912.

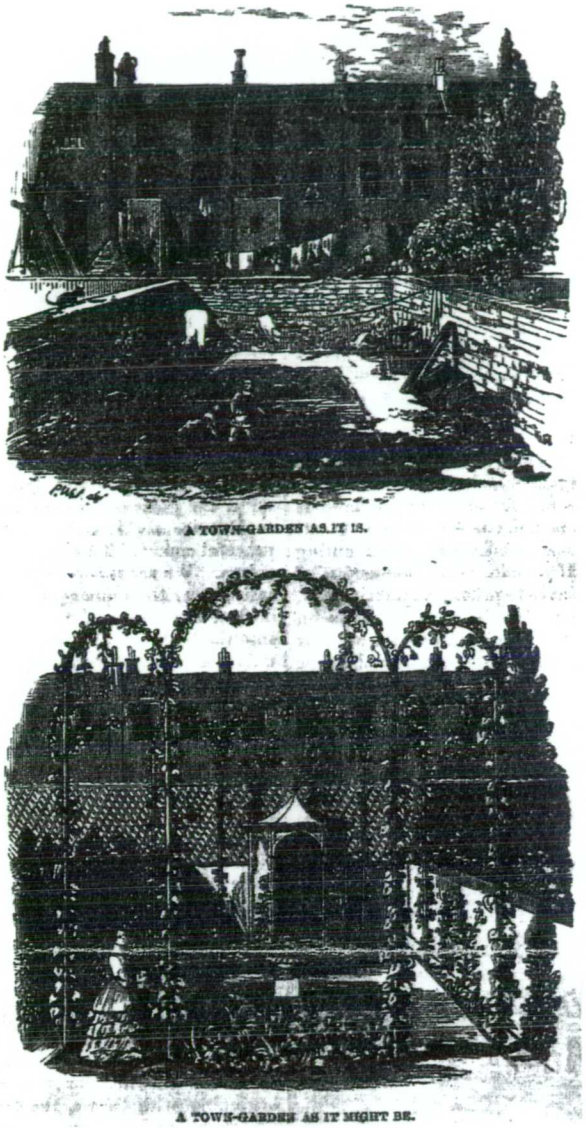


Fig. 3·20 'Recommended plan for the improvement of a town garden overlooked by the railway', Shirley Hibberd, *The National Magazine*, 1857 (Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, John Johnson Collection).

Fig. 3·21 Mrs. Major Ponto (of the Horse Marines), overlooked in the garden of *The Evergreens*, by phaeton-folk.

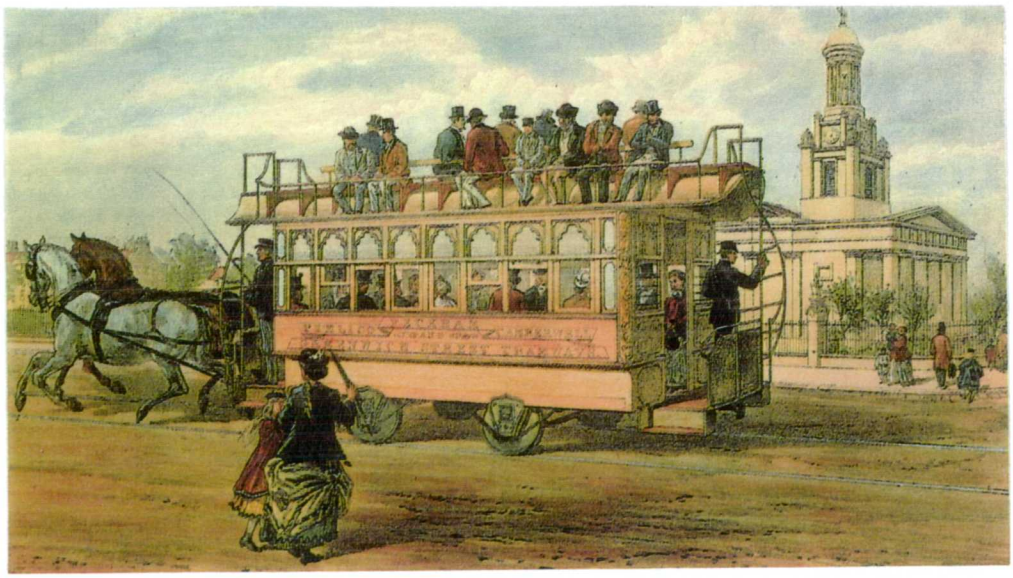
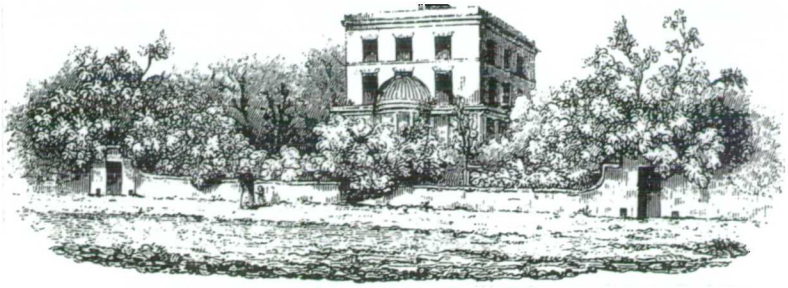
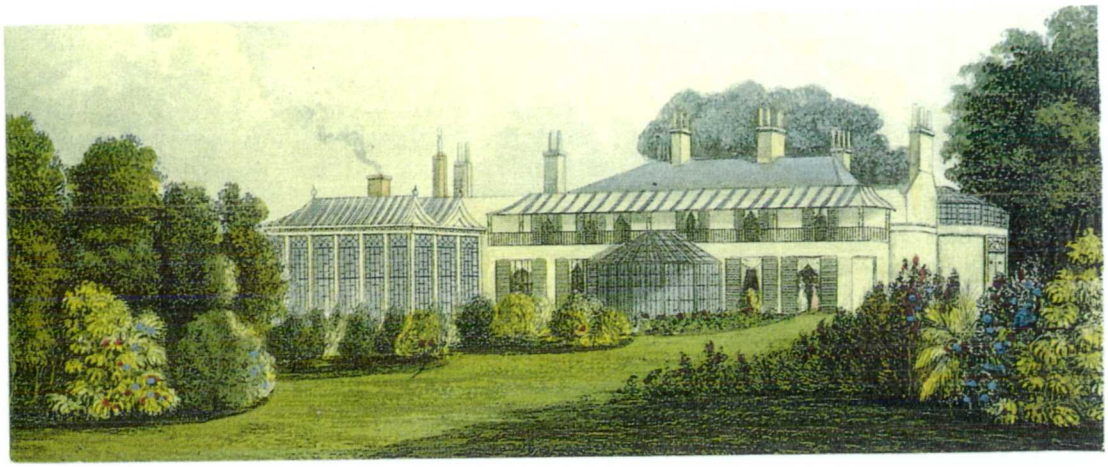


Fig. 3·22 The horse-drawn tram: *St. Mark's Church, Camberwell New Road*, 1870, anonymous engraving, (London Transport Museum)





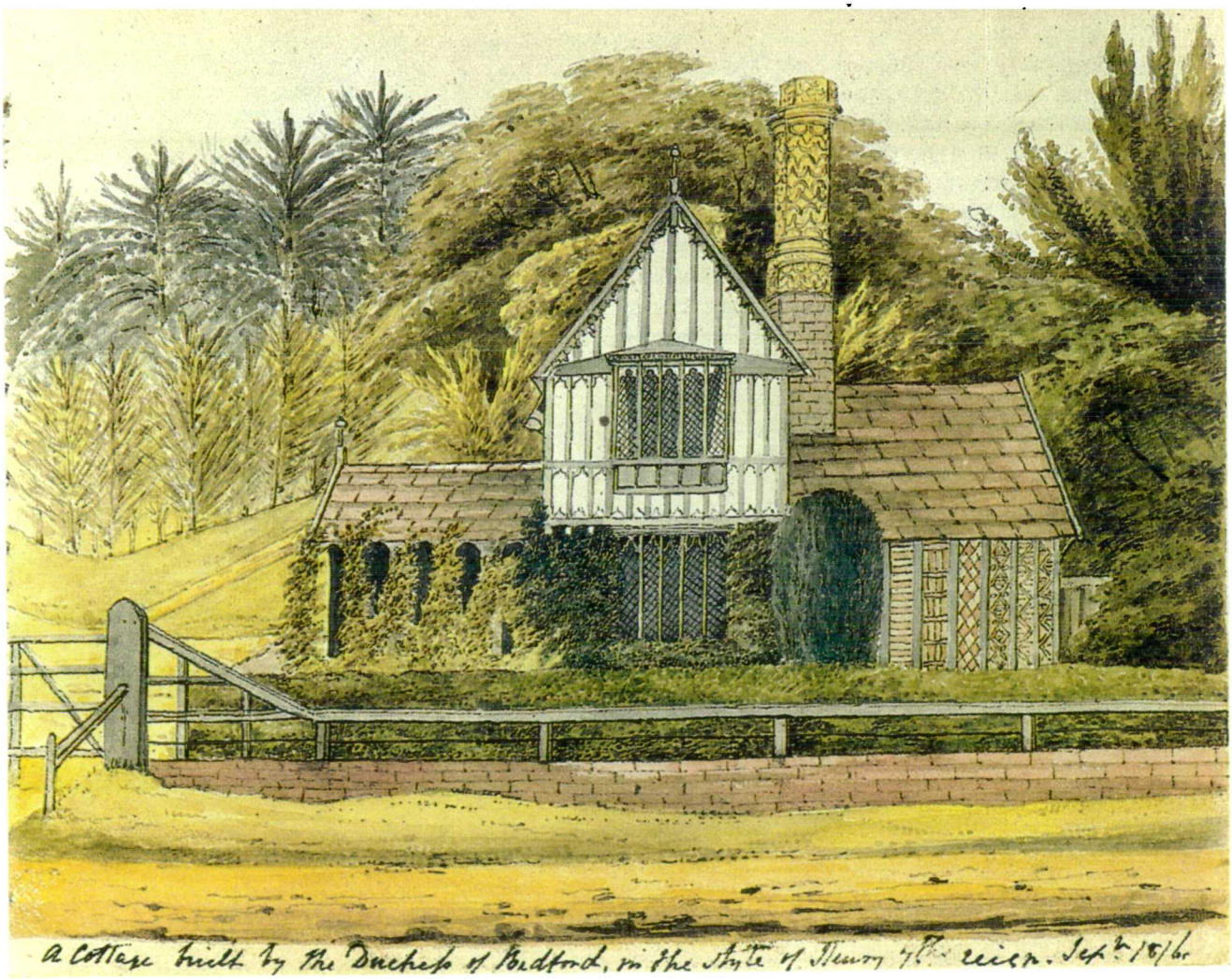


Fig. 4.1 The Loudons' villa, 3, Porchester Terrace, Bayswater, (Boniface, *In Search of English Gardens*, 1988).
Fig. 4.2 Regency villa and glass houses, *Ackerman's Country Seats*, 1830, (Batey, *Regency Gardens*, 1995).
Fig. 4.3 *A Cottage built by the Duchess of Bedford, in the style of Henry 7th's reign. September 1816.* Diana Sperling (1791-1862). The cottage, at Woburn Sands, was designed by Humphry and John Adey Repton in 1810-11. (Mingay, *Mrs Hurst Dancing*, 1981)

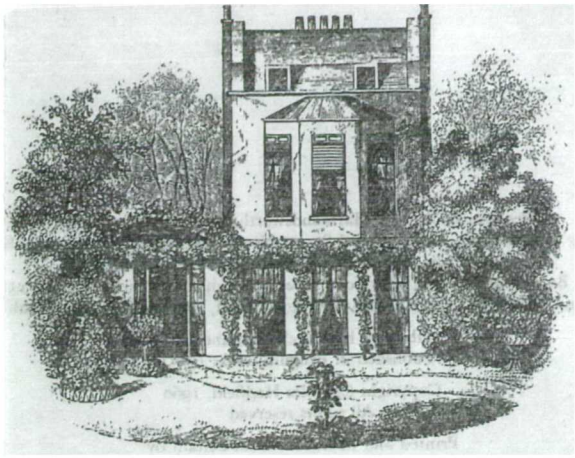


Fig. 4.4 The 'Lawrencian Villa', Drayton Green, Middlesex. View of Mrs. Lawrence's house and garden. (John Claudius Loudon, *The Villa Gardener*, 1838).

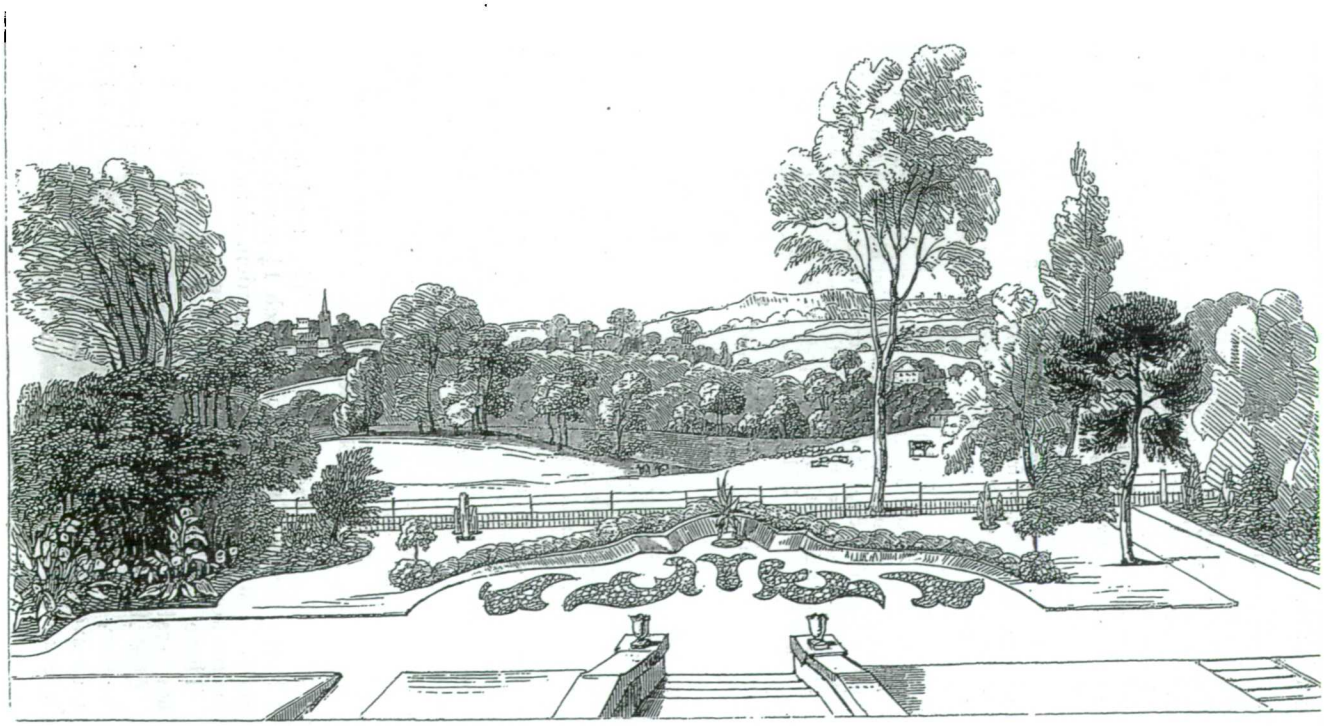
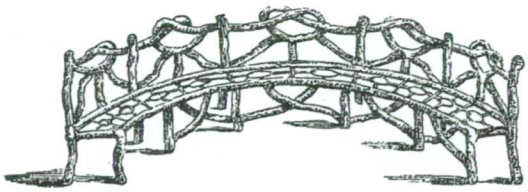


Fig. 4.5 'The Villa of W. A. Nesfield, Esq., Fortis Green, Muswell Hill, Finchley'. (*Gardener's Magazine*, 1840)

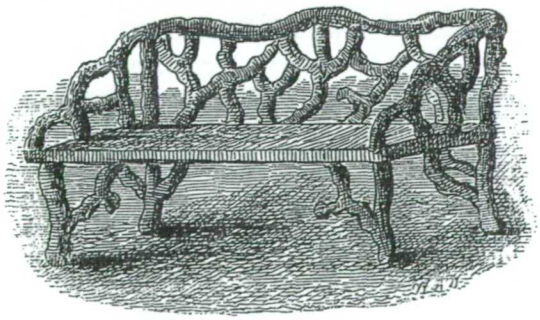
RUSTIC ADORNMENTS.

congruity—these are the words that should be remembered at every step. Secure fitness of style, and the individual taste may roam at pleasure through all the regions of statuary and fancy-work, till it finds pleasure in the smallest



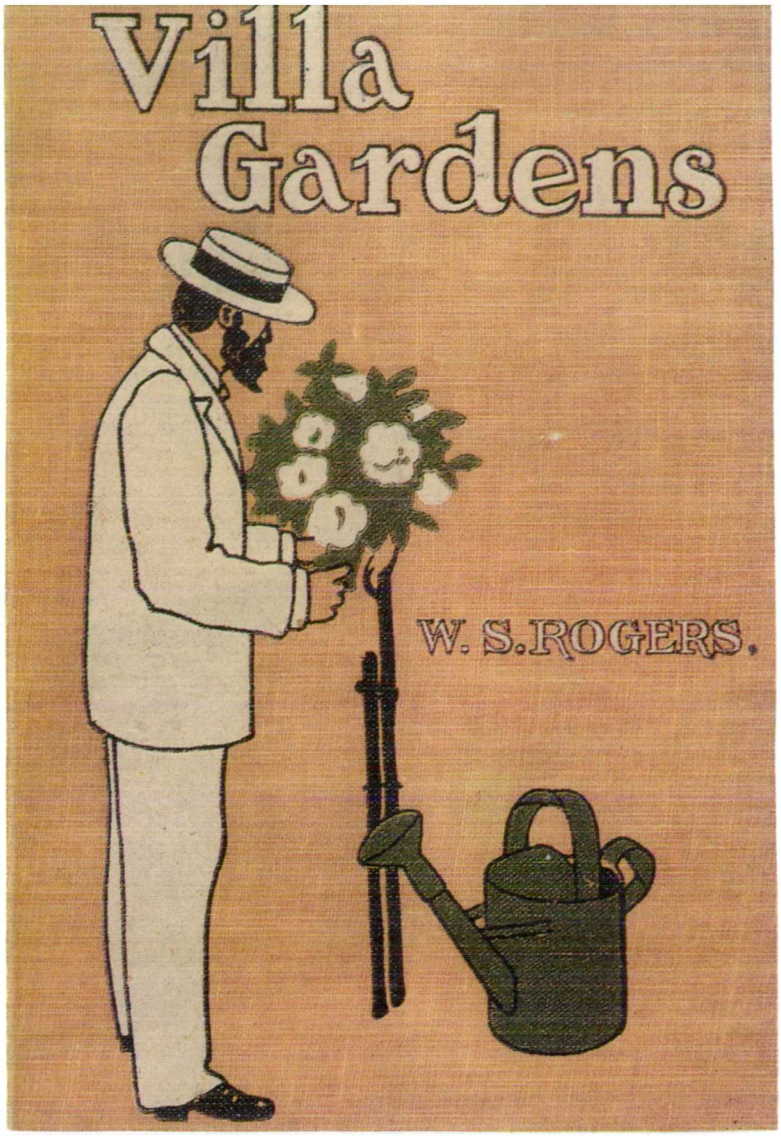
and humblest ornament that ever decked the threshold of an English home.

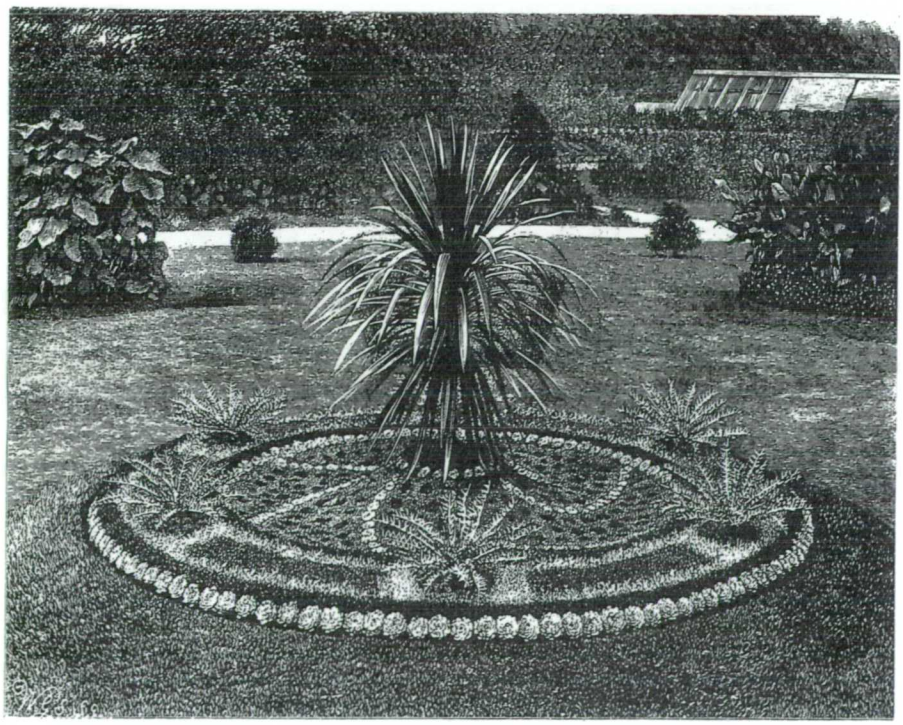
Where a rustic tone prevails, as it does in the good old English gardens, where the digitalis and the hollyhock still assert their claims to admiration, there are no better ornaments than rustic baskets and tree-stumps. In such a



garden the summer-house should be of simple design, with an elliptic arch, or domed roof of bark or thatch, the front opening to a rill of water on a green slope, beyond which the eye catches avenues of stately flowers, while on the

Fig. 4.6Rustic summer-house, c. 1914. (Gardening Bygones).
Fig. 4.7 Rustic seats in *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, 1856.

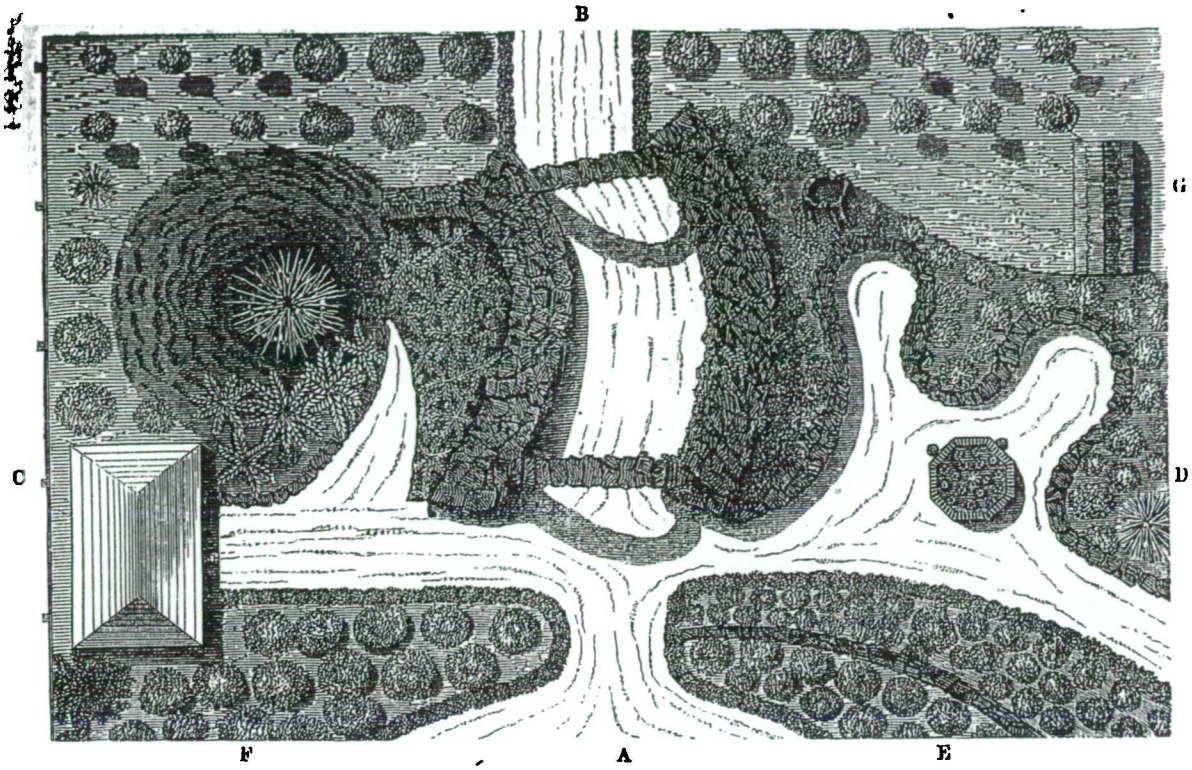




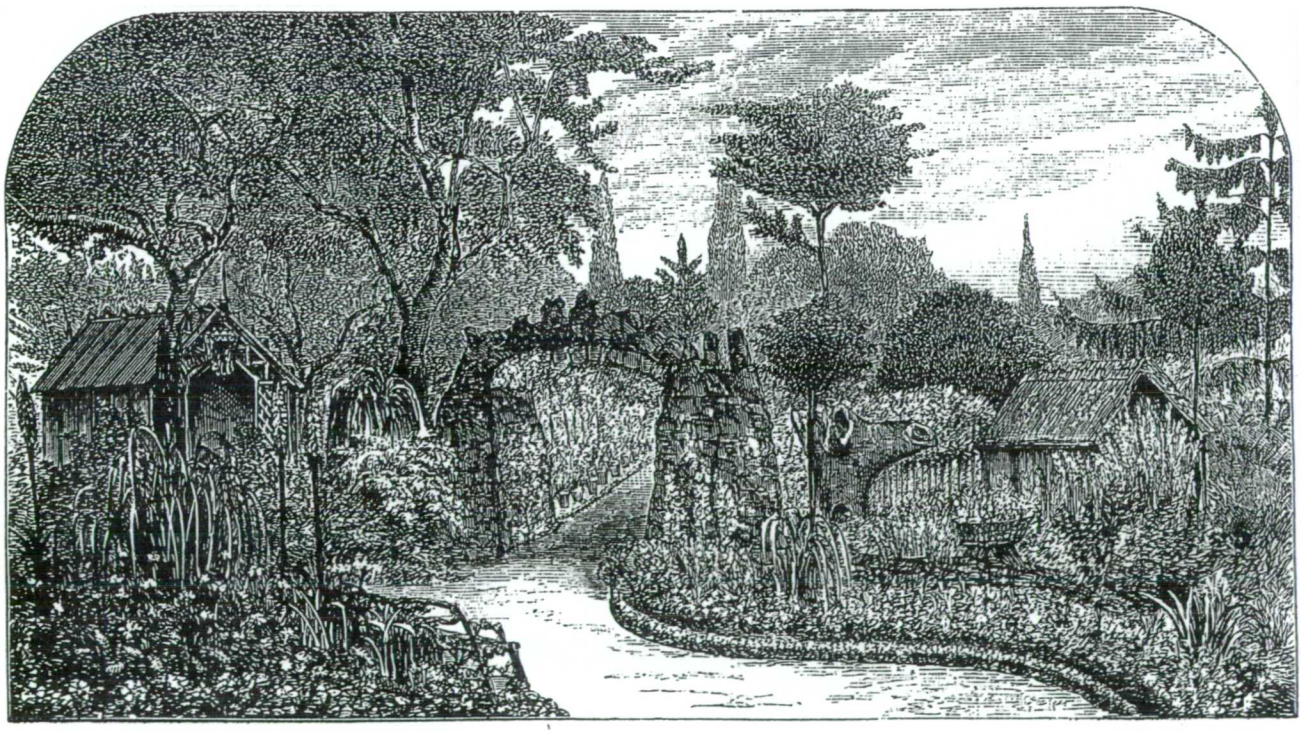
The centrepiece of Mr and Mrs Ralli's celebrated display of carpet bedding at Cleveland House, south London.

Fig. 4.8 Standard rose-tree, *Villa Gardens*, c.1910.

Fig. 4.9 Carpet-bedding in a private Balham garden, *Gardener's Chronicle* 1876.



GROUND-PLAN OF ROCKERY AT STOKE NEWINGTON.



ROCKERY, SUMMER-HOUSE, AND BEE SHED AT STOKE NEWINGTON.

Fig. 4.19 'Close by my garden house, where I enjoy an occasional quiet hour ... I have what is ordinarily called a rockery'. *Floral World*, 7, (10), 1864.

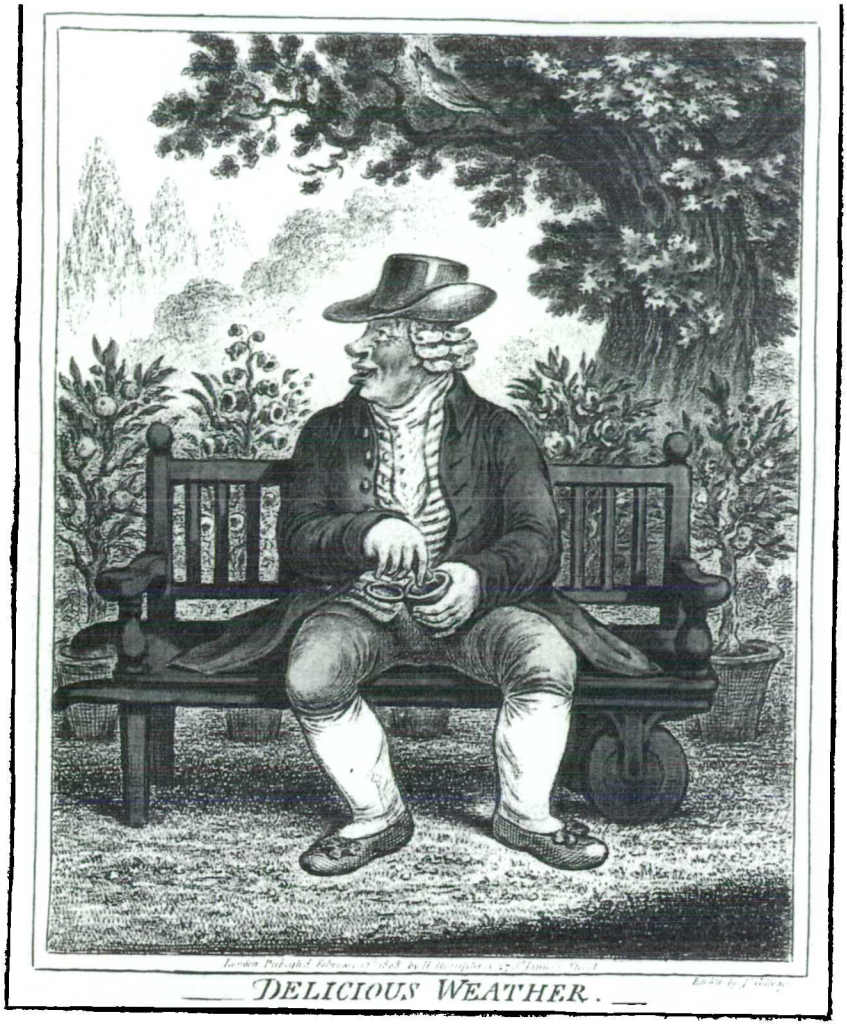


Fig.4·11 *Delicious Weather*, James Gilray, 1808. A satirical portrait of an *arriviste* villa or country gardener, surrounded, like the English oak, by potted exotic flower and fruit trees, and conifers.

Fig.4·12 *Planting and Digging, Nov. 13. 1816. Tickford.* Diana Sperling (Mingay, *Mrs. Hurst Dancing*), 1981), Henry Van Hagen and the girls' attempts at gardening in his Essex plot.

Views of the threshold:

Fig. 5.1 *At Breakfast, Easter Sunday*, (detail), signed C.E.D. April 29 1829

Fig. 5.2 *Morning Room*, signed C.E.D. Tuesday April 28, 1829, (Cecil Elizabeth Drummond), (Lasdun, *The Drummond Children's World*, 1983).

Fig. 5.3 *Harry Rochfort playing his flute - D. I. & Charles*, at Dynes Hall, Halstead, Essex, Diana Sperling, c.1816 (Mingay, *Mrs Hurst Dancing*, 1981).

Fig. 5.4 The Drummond's country home at Denham, Buckinghamshire, marked August 1st 1828, Cecil [Elizabeth Drummond], (Lasdun, *The Drummond Children's World*, 1983).

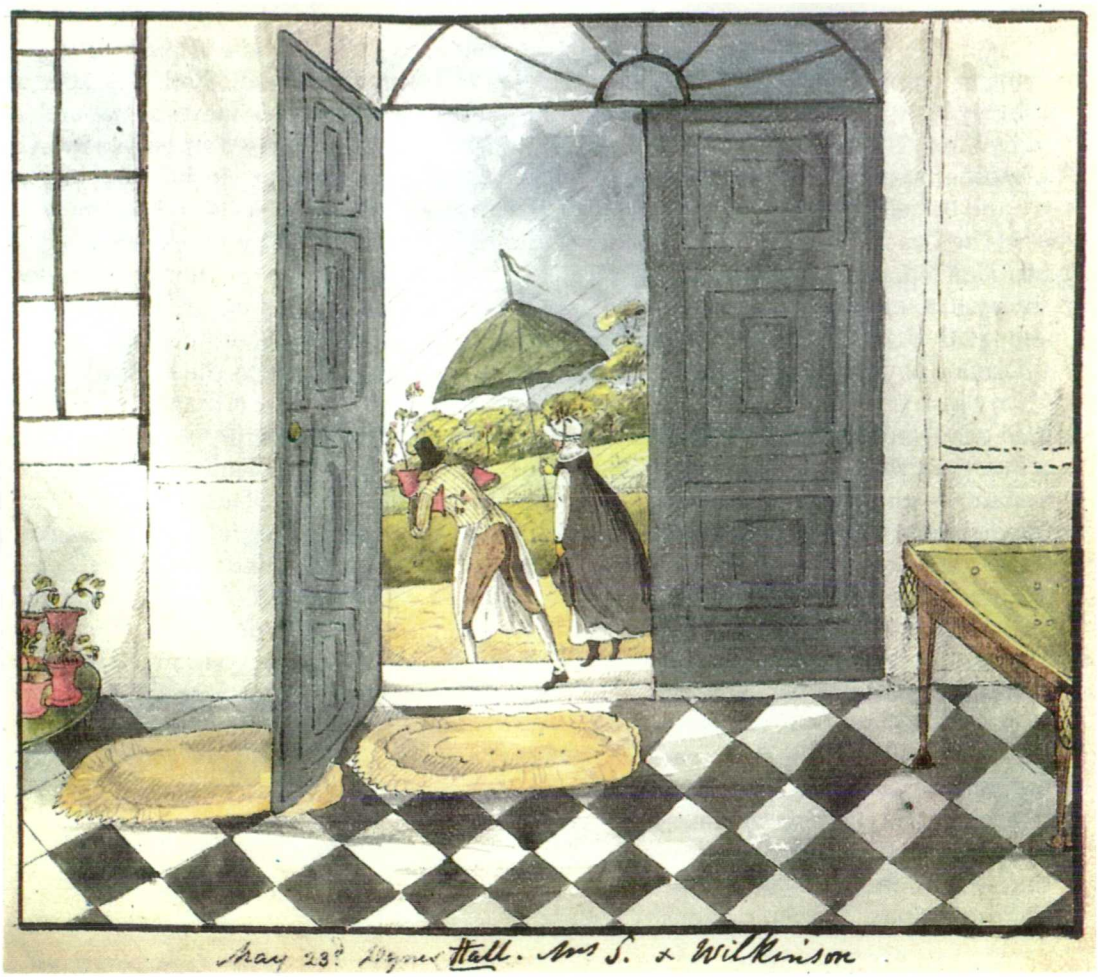
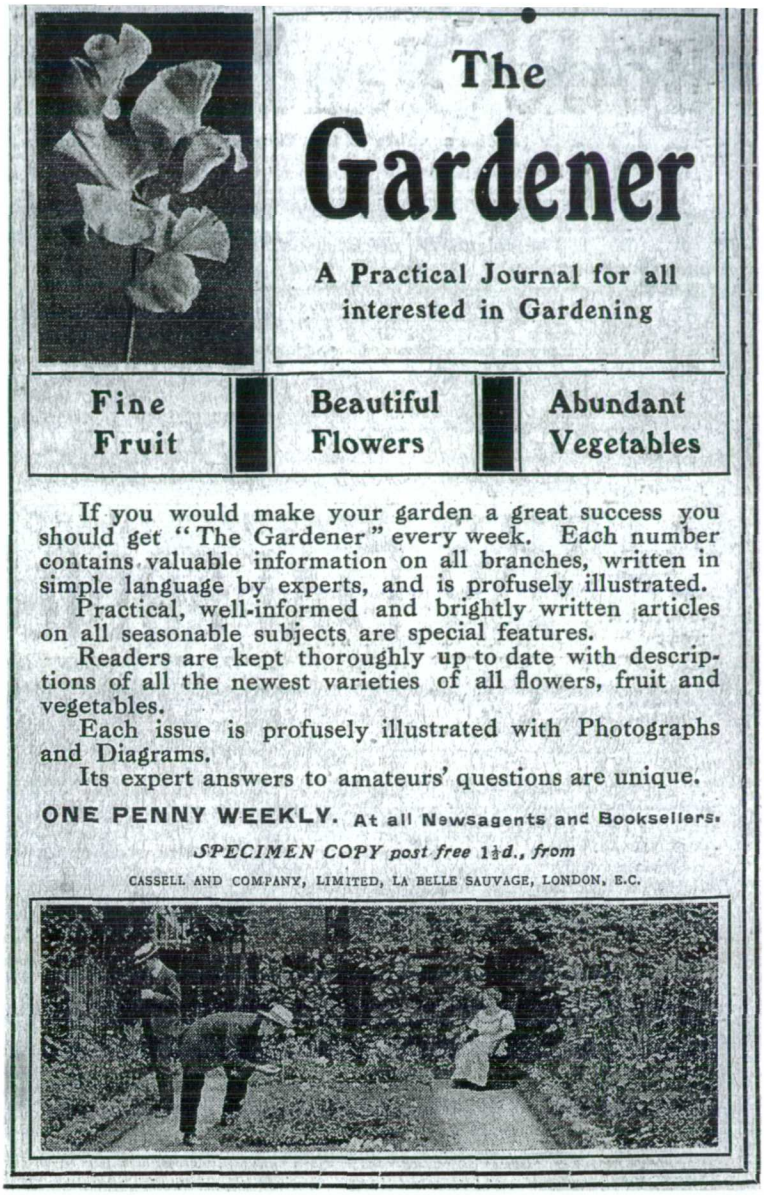


Fig. 5.5 *May 23rd. Dynes Hall, Mrs. S. and Wilkinson.* The servant is carrying Mrs. Sperling's potted geraniums from the hall to the garden. Diana Sperling, c.1816, (Mingay, *Mrs Hurst Dancing*, 1981).

Fig. 5.6 *April 16. 1816, rolling the plat at Dynes Hall - Essex.* The artist is supervising the donkey and roller, Henry Van Hagen is tracing the circular lawn's outer edge. Diana Sperling, (Mingay, *Mrs Hurst Dancing*, 1981).



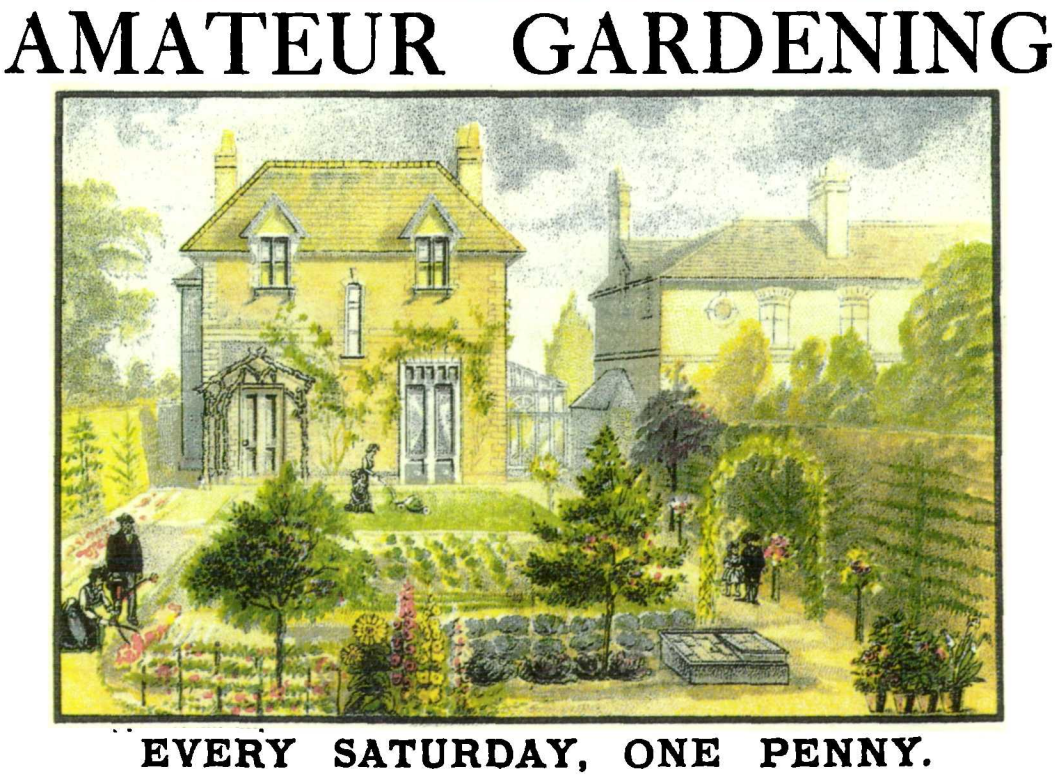
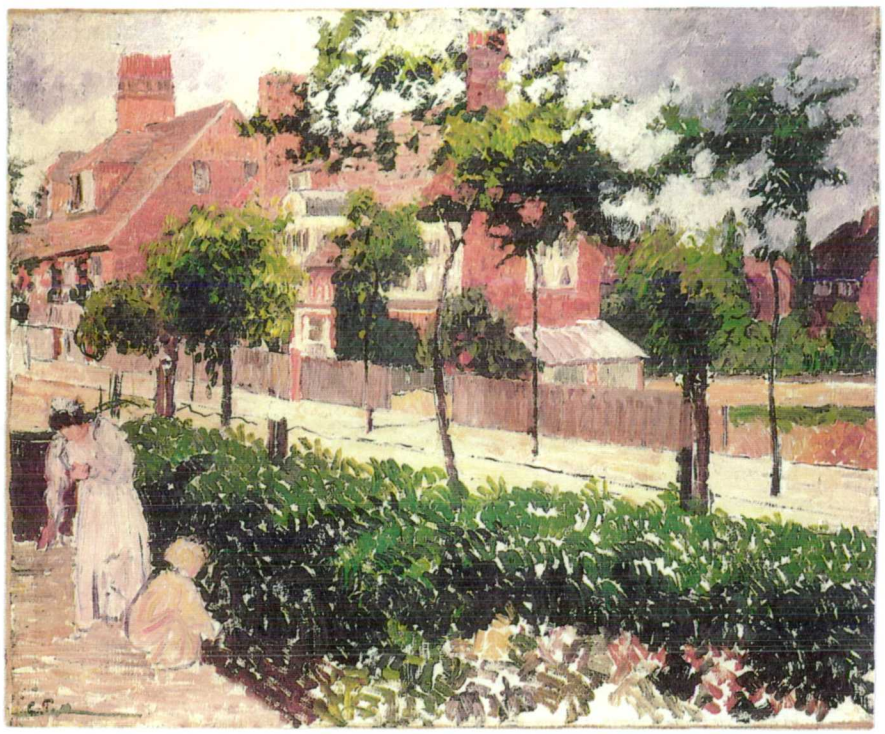


Fig. 5.7 Advertisement for *The Gardener*, 1912
Fig. 5.8 Advertisement for *Amateur Gardening*, c. 1890.

Fig. 5.9 Mrs. Ponto and the Misses Ponto gardening 'without crinolines' at The Evergreens. Thackeray, *The Book of Snobs*, 1845.

Fig. 5.10 *Bedford Park, Bath Road*, c.1880, Camille Pissarro, (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford). Bedford Park Garden Suburb had its own Gardening and Natural History Club.



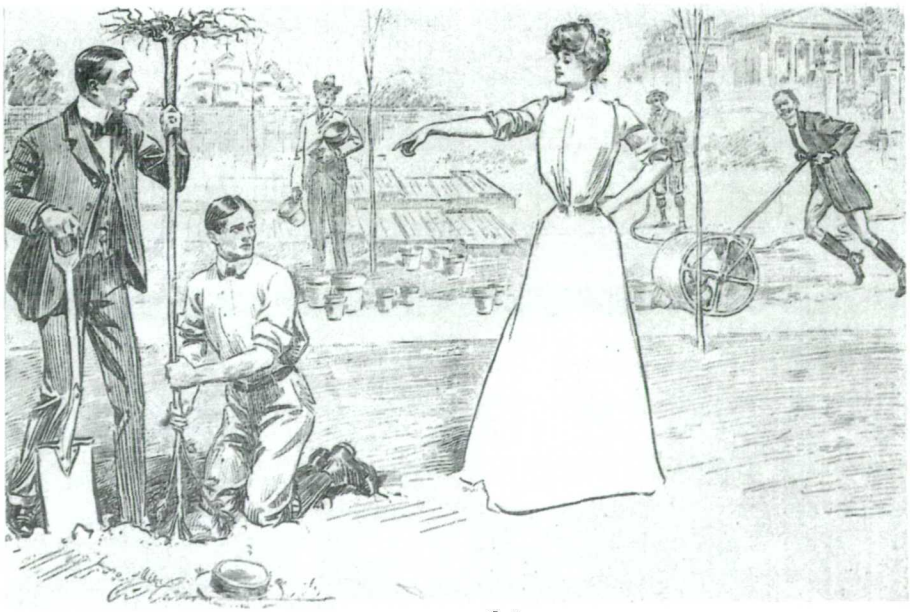
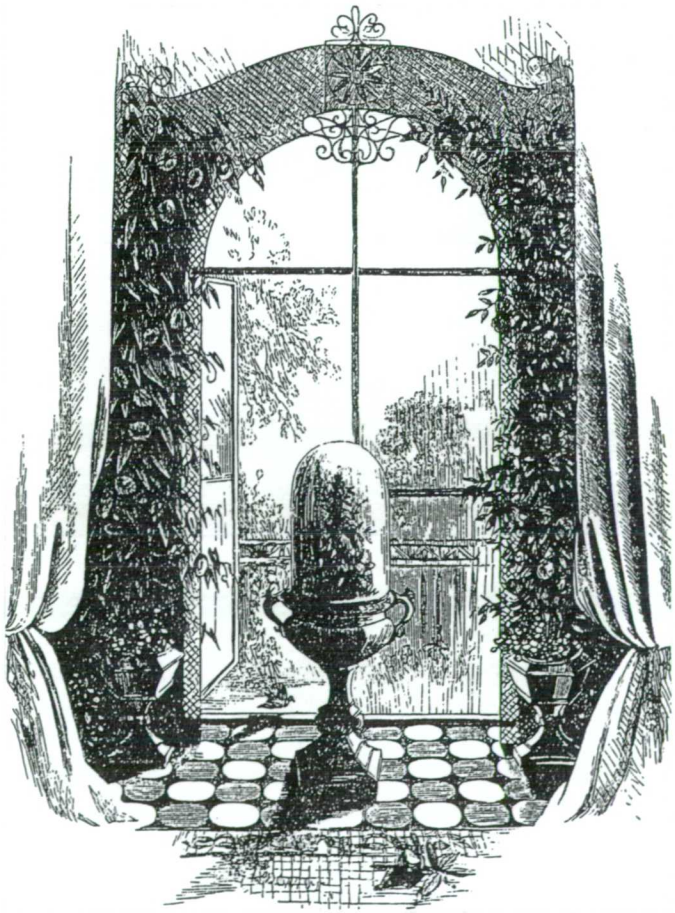
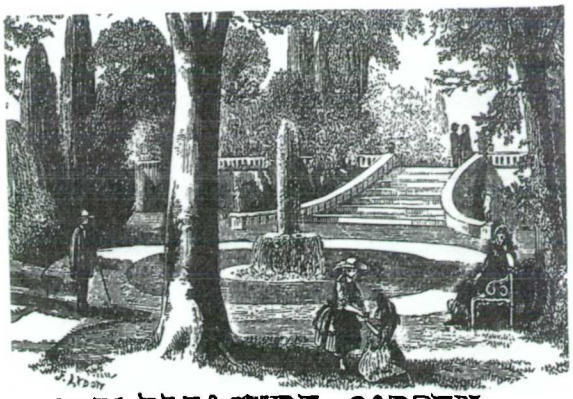
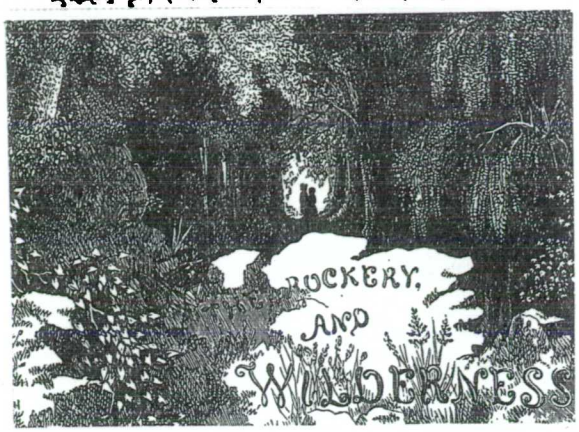


Fig. 5.11 *Love in a Garden*, from a Nursery catalogue of Henderson & Sons, c. 1910.



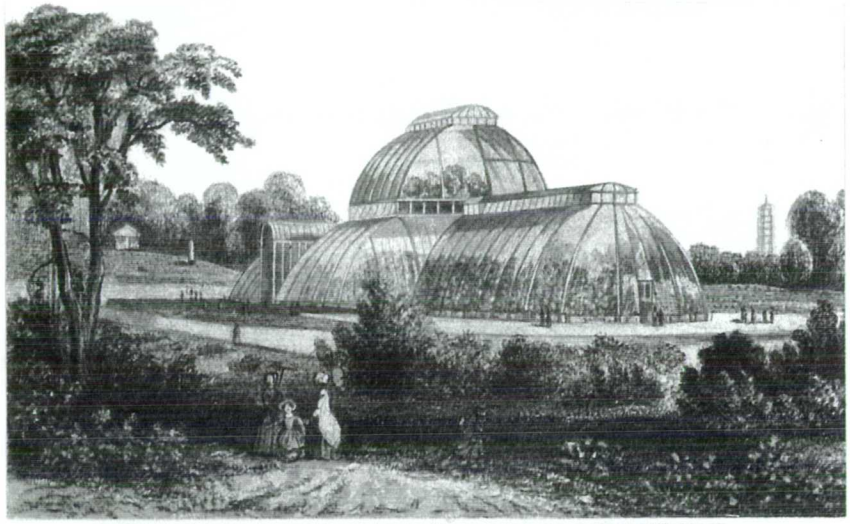
Figs. 5.12& 5.13 A view from the interior out; and from the exterior in. Hibberd, *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, 1857.





Close Encounters:
Figs. 5.14In the Pleasure-garden and Wilderness,
Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste, 1856.

Fig. 5.15In the Summer-House: *The fat boy awake on this occasion only*, Phiz, c.1850.



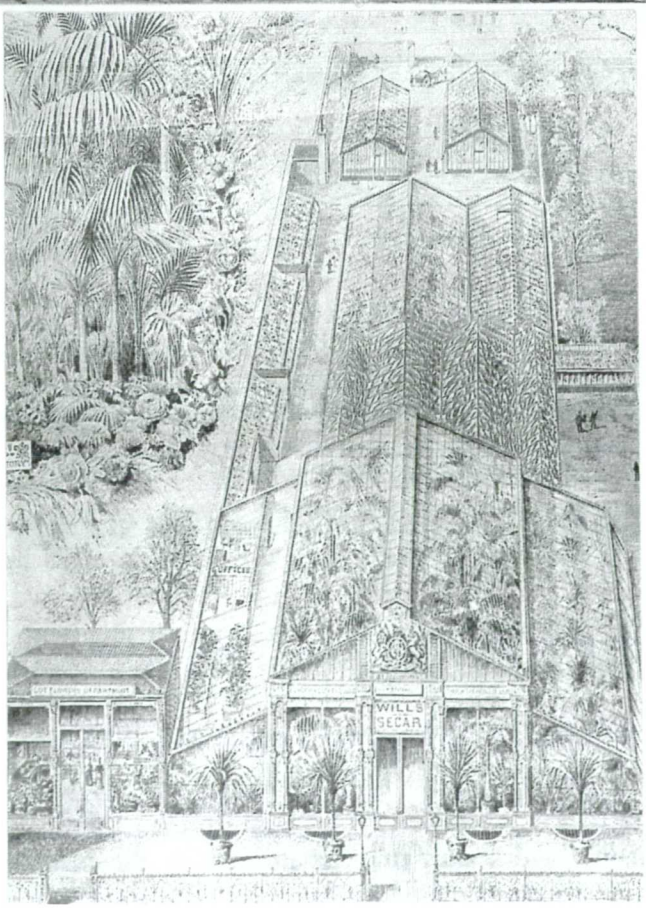
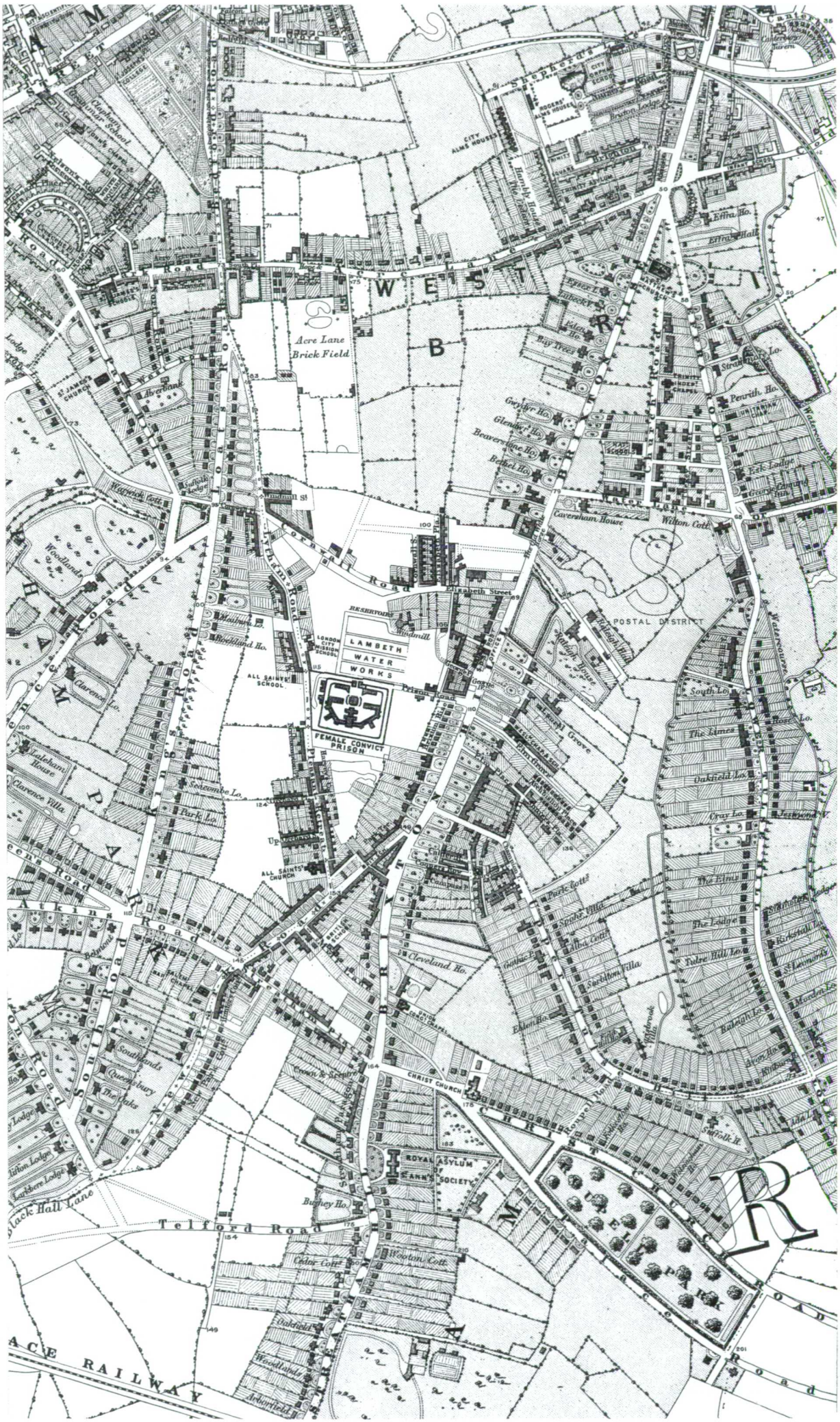
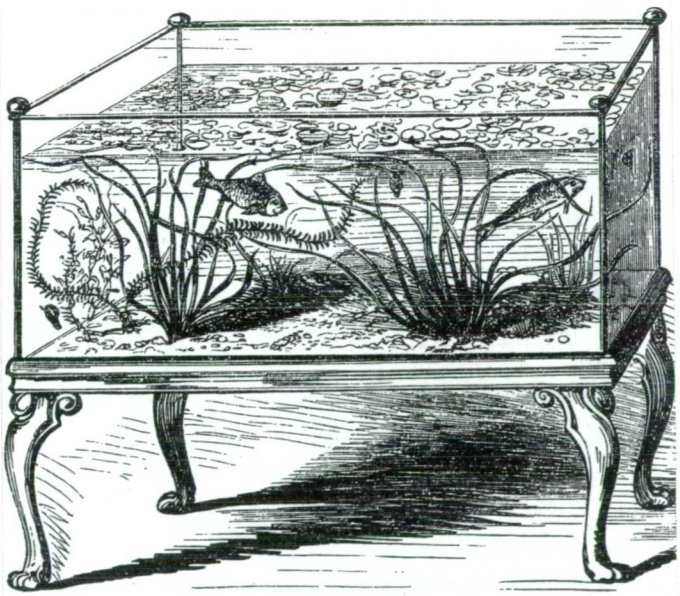
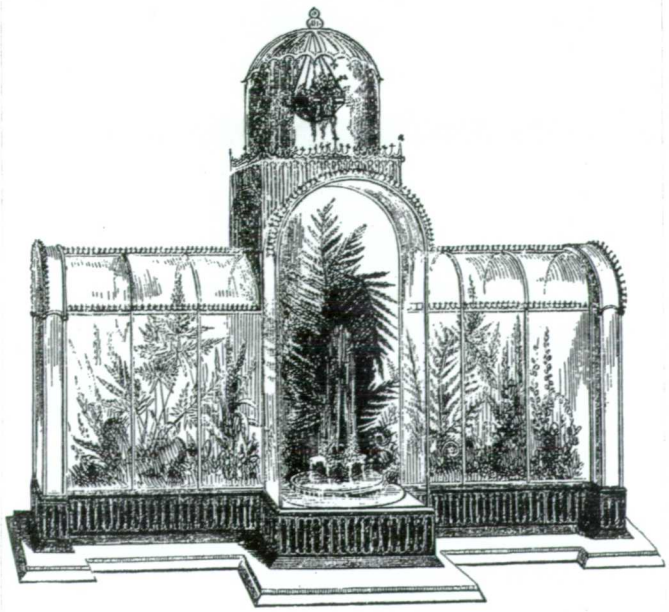


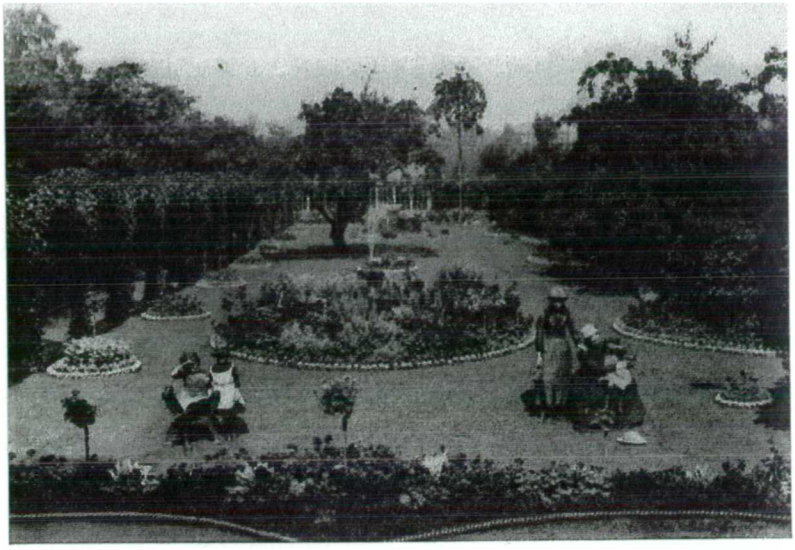
Fig. 5.16 Flower Show at the Royal Botanic Society, Regent's Park, c.1870 (Galinou, 1990)
Fig. 5.17 Palm House, Kew Gardens, c.1848, (Galinou, *London's Pride*, 1990).
Fig. 5.18 Wills & Segar Showrooms, Onslow Crescent, South Kensington, c.1870 (Galinou 1990)


Acre Lane
Brick Field
LAMBETH
WATER
WORKS
FEMALE CONVICT
PRISON
POSTAL DISTRICT
Telford Road
ROYAL ASYLUM
OF ANN'S SOCIETY
CHRIST CHURCH
ALL SAINTS' CHURCH
ALL SAINTS' SCHOOL
Caversham House
Cleveland Ho.
Bushey Ho.
Wilton Cott.
Cedar Cott.
Oakfield
Woodfield
Arborfield
Southlands
Queensbury
The Oaks
Clarence Ho.
Lalcham House
Clarence Villa
Woodlands
Wayrick Cott.
Suffolk Lodge
Iverbank
Bay Tree
Gwydyr Ho.
Glendyr Ho.
Beaverstone Ho.
Bethel Ho.
Pewith Ho.
Ellen Ho.
Ellen Villa
Sydenham Villa
Park Cott.
Sparks Villa
Elba Cott.
Gatsby Ho.
Eskdale Lodge
Grove Cottage
Wilton Lodge
Lambert Lodge
Lackham Lodge
Lack Hall Lane
Crown & Sceptre
Brixton Road
Coldharbour Lane
Effra Road
Water Lane
Atkins Road
Acre Lane
Cornwall Road
Elizabeth Street
Prison Road
Brixton Hill
Effra Hall
Effra Ho.
Effra Villa
Effra Park Road
Effra Park
Suffolk St.
Tulse Hill Lo.
Raleigh Lo.
Oakfield Lo.
Cray Lo.
The Elms
The Lodge
The Limes
South Lo.
Rose Lo.
Stratford Lo.
Grove Lo.
Tulse Hill
Tulse Hill Villa
Raleigh Villa
Raleigh Hall
Raleigh House
Wellington Grove
Brixton Grove
Brixton Lodge
Brixton Hill Asylum
Brixton Hill Chapel
Rogers' Alms House
City Alms House
Shepherds
Hambly House
Hambly Villa
Lambert Road
Coldharbour Road
Wandsworth Road
Clapham Road
Clapham Grammar School
Clark's School
Lambeth Road
Kennington Road
Kennington Park Road
Camberwell Road
Walworth Road
Walnut Tree Walk
Walnut Tree Cottage
Woodland Ho.
Woodland Villa
Wellington Cottage
Wellington Villa
Wellington Chapel
Wellington Road
Wellington Place
Wellington Terrace
Wellington Grove
Wellington Square
Wellington Cottage
Wellington Lodge

Figs. 5.20 *Rustic Adornments for Homes of Taste*, 1856: Wardian Case, Aquarium, and Fernery.







Figs. 5.21 & 5.22 At home in the garden: the Butters family, Hackney, c. 1880 (Hackney Archives)

Fig. 5.23 Cultivating the family, c. 1890 (Gardening Bygones)

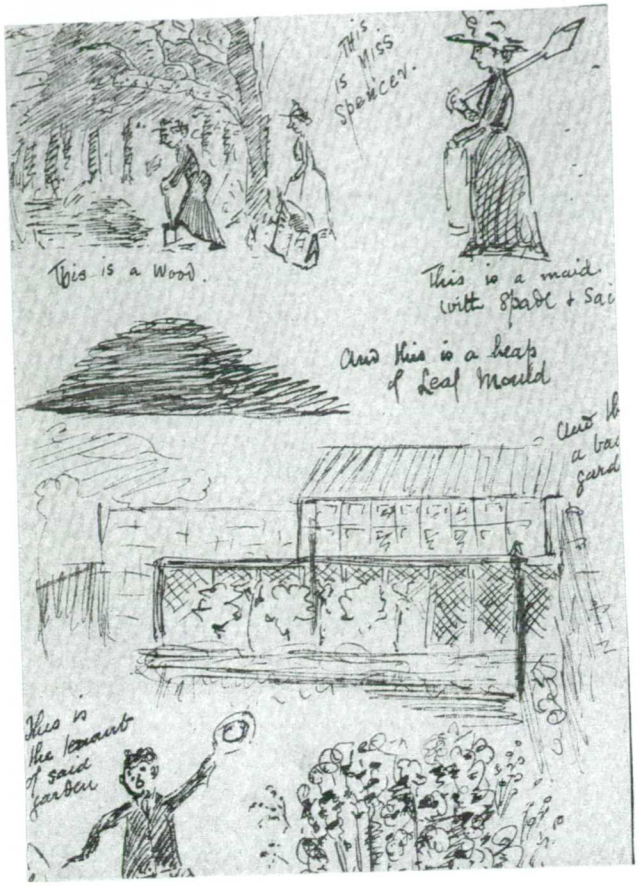


Fig. 5.24 Card illustrating gardening activities, c. 1880. (Gardening Bygones)

Fig. 5.25 Photograph of two florists with their exhibition grade roses, sweet peas and children. Note the paper discs protecting the flowers in the foreground from direct sunlight. c. 1905. (Gardening Bygones)

Fig. 5.26 The lascivious leer of the travelling plant seller: *The Gardener*, Thomas Rowlandson, 1799.

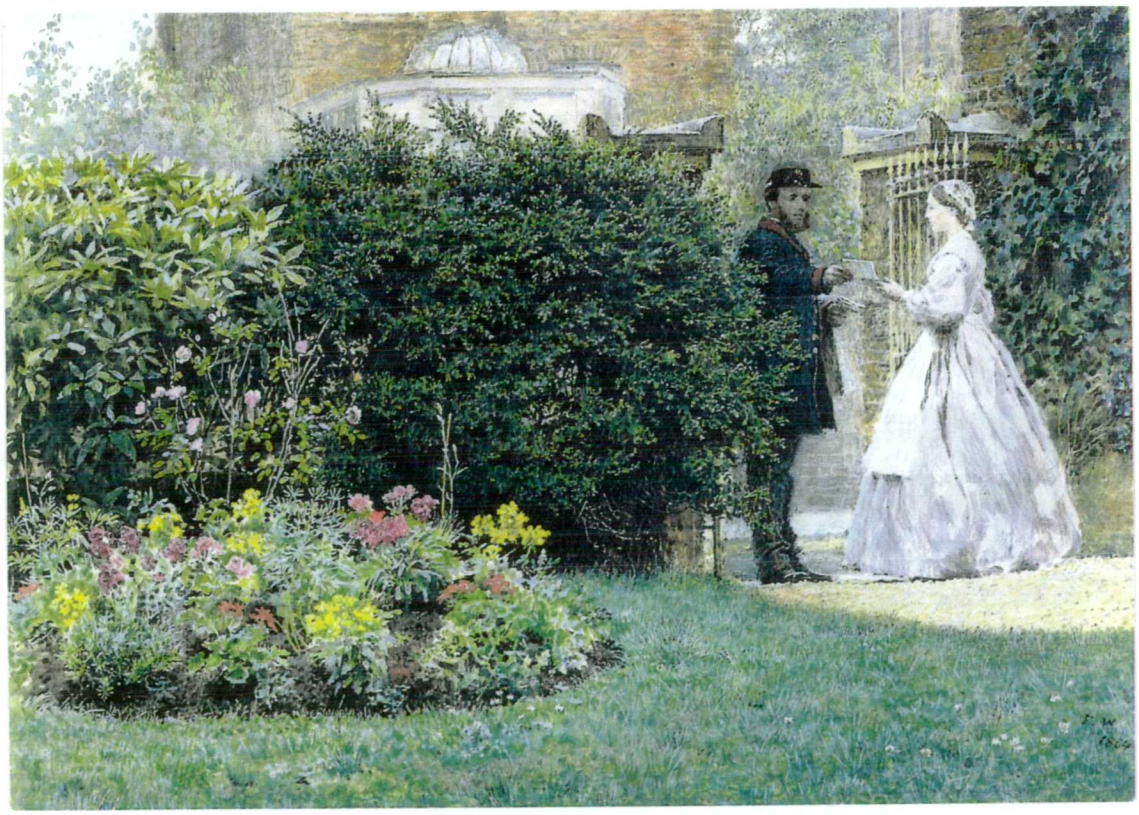
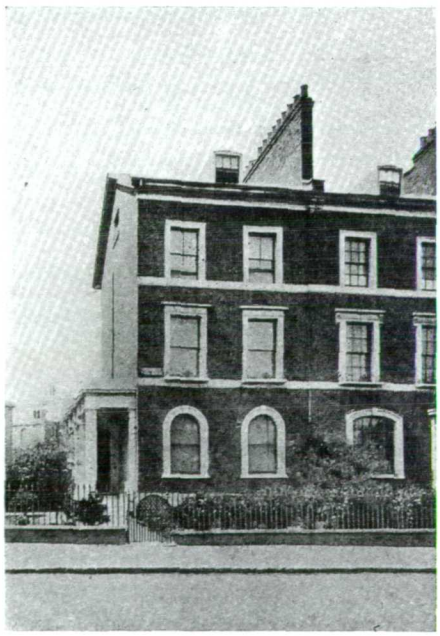


Fig. 5.27 *My Front Garden*, 1864, Frederick Walker, (Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston)

Nearly there.

"The Laurels."



No. 1 CANONBURY PARK NORTH

Fig. 5.28 'Nearly there' and 'The Laurels', Grossmith, *Diary of a Nobody*, 1888-89.

Fig. 5.29 Molly Hughes' home, ***A London Family 1870-1900.***

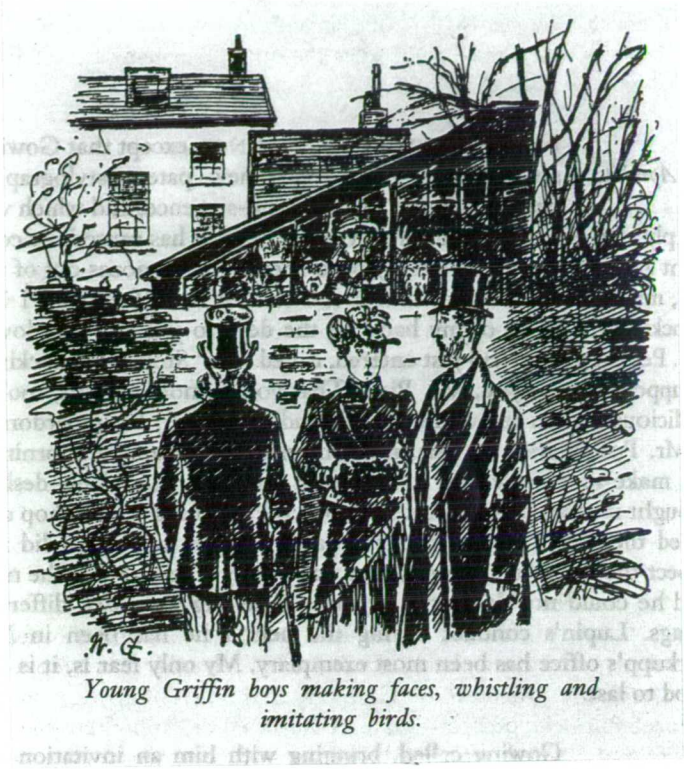


Fig. 5.2 Grossmith, *Diary of a Nobody*, 1888-89.

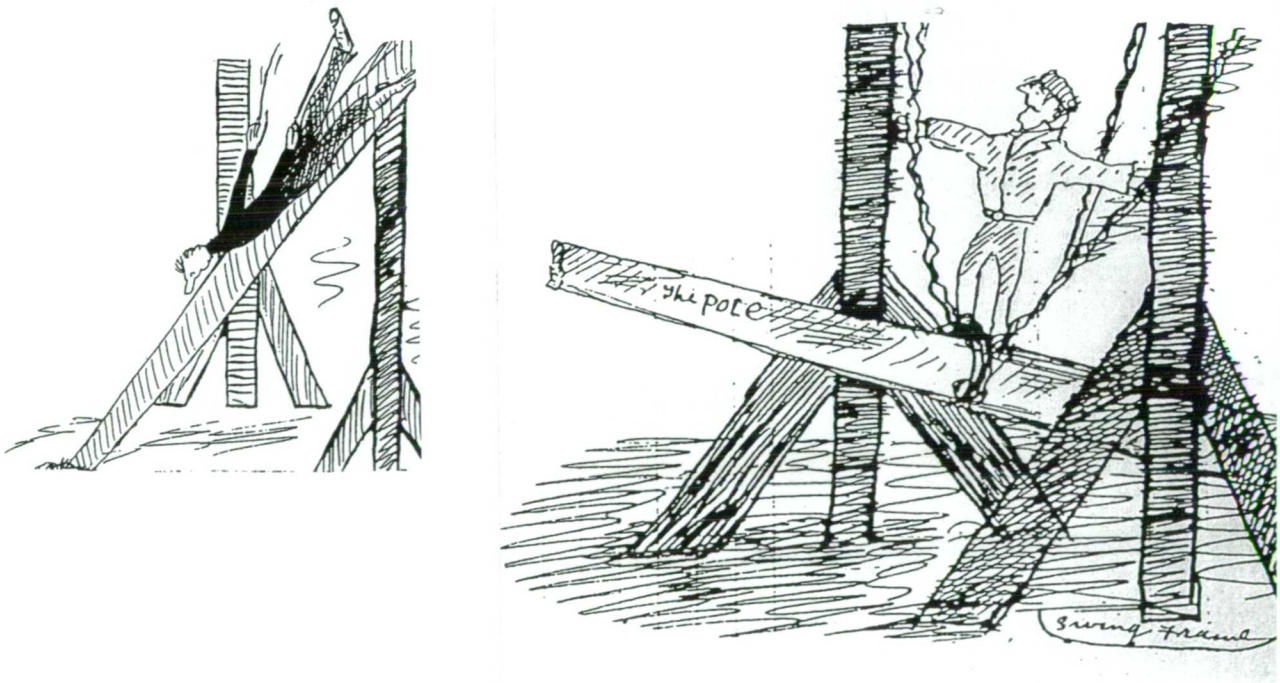
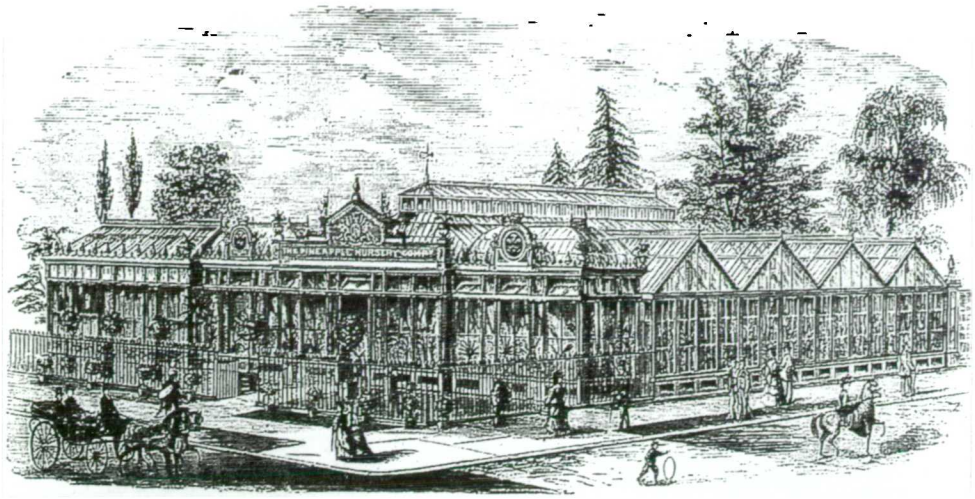
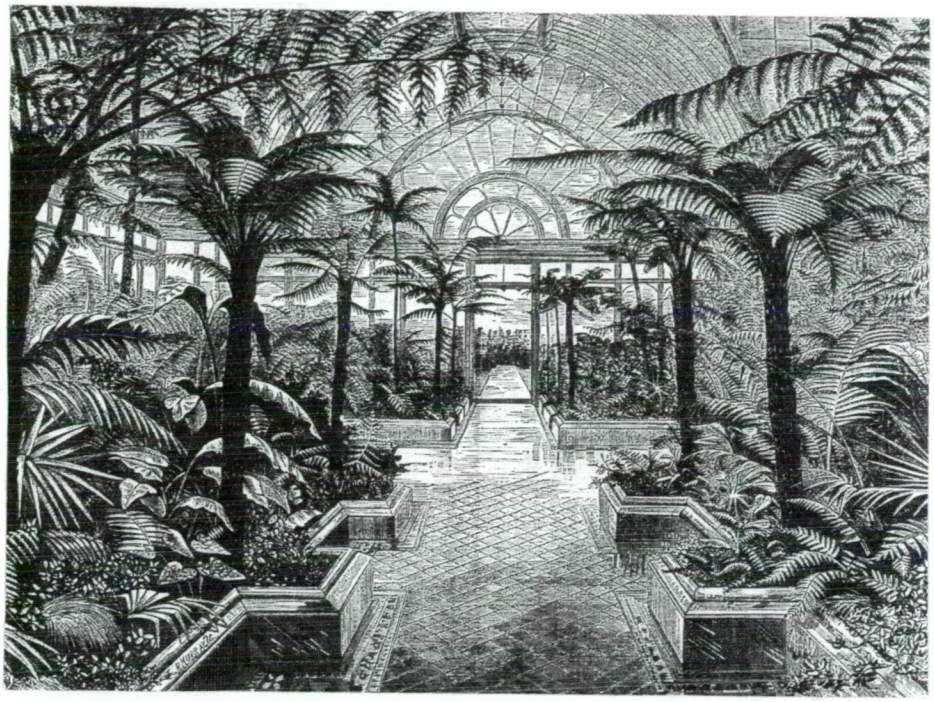


Fig. 5.3 Ernest Baker and his garden pole, Kingsland Road, Hackney, 1882, (Rodgers, (ed.), *Victorian Schoolboy*).

Figs. 5.32Edwardian family gardens. (Gardening Bygones)





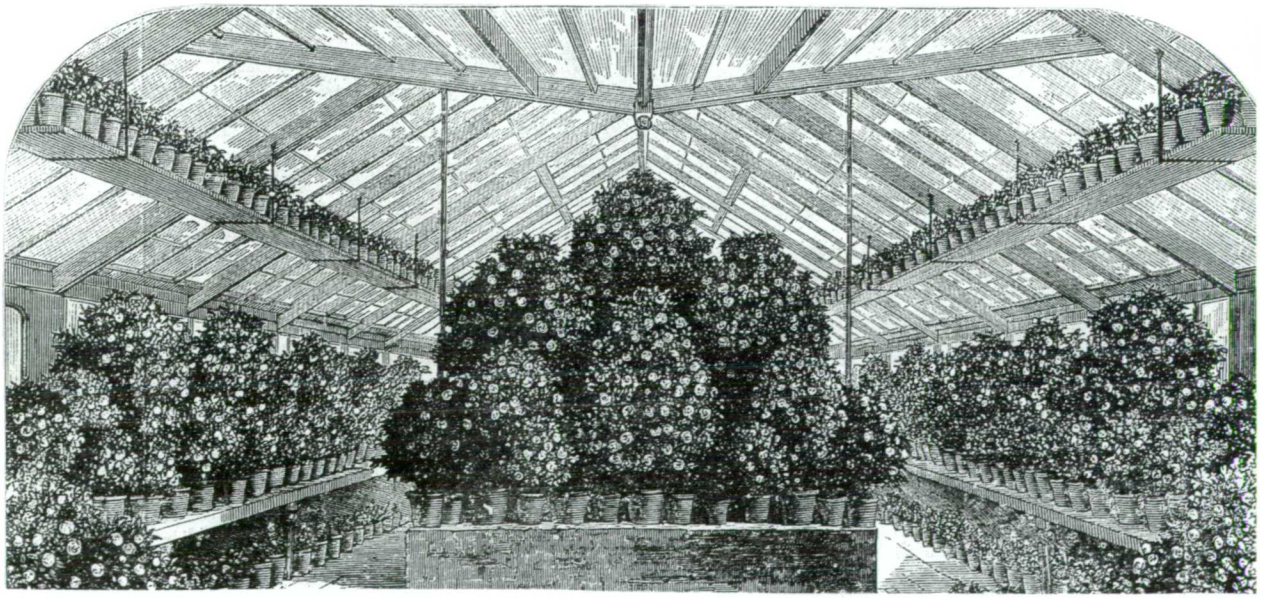


Fig. 6.1 E. G. Henderson's Pine-apple Nursery, Edgware Road, Showhouse designed by Weeks, c.1870.
Fig. 6.2 Advertisement for J. Weeks & Co., King's Road Chelsea, c. 1870.
Fig. 6.3 Benjamin William's Victoria Nursery, Holloway: the Camellia House, c. 1860.

Fig. 6.4 A Crystal Palace on a domestic scale, late nineteenth-century private glasshouse (Gardening Bygones)

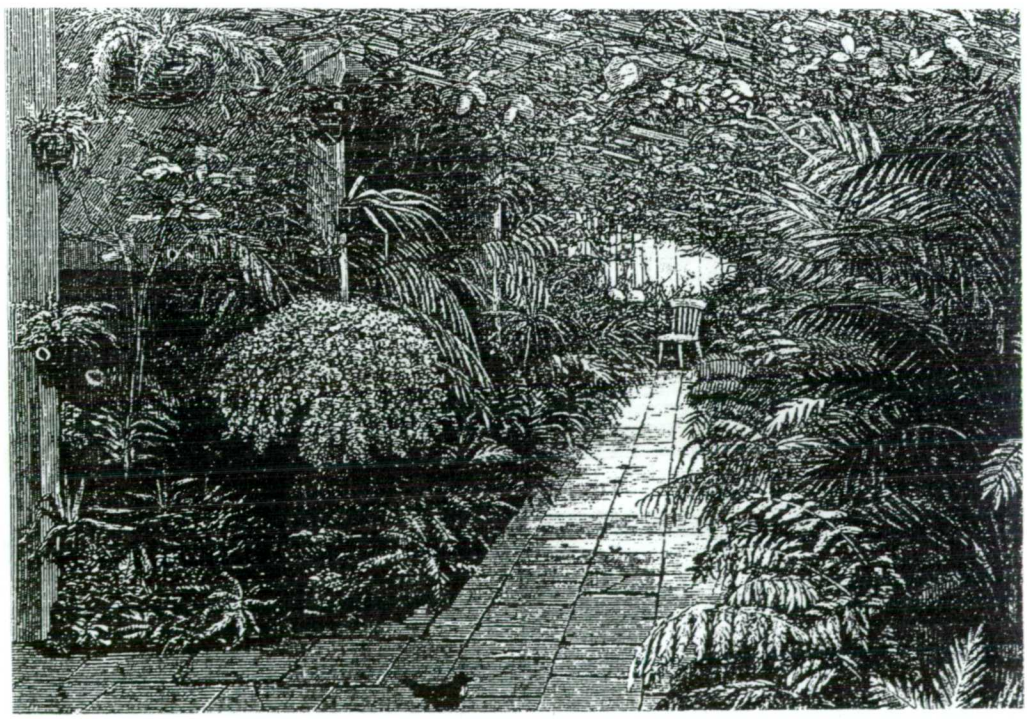


Fig. 6.5 'A part and parcel of the garden, and yet not utterly separated from the dwelling house'. The Hibberds' greenhouse of hardy plants at Stoke Newington. *Floral World*, 1 (1), 1866.

Fig. 6.6 Brugmansia Suaveolens,
William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, 1889.

Rhododendron Nobleanum.

Fig. 6.7 Rhododendrons naturalised in an English garden,
William Robinson, *The English Flower Garden*, 1889.

Fig. 6.8. Detail from J. Atkinson Grimshaw, *The Rector's Garden: Queen of the Lilies*, 1877, Harris Museum and Art Gallery.

Although this painting is richly symbolic, the scene was in fact painted of an actual garden at Yew Court, Scalby. Susan Casteras suggests that the woman is the artist's wife (*Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*, Associated University Press, 1987, p. 58). The editor of Atkinson Grimshaw's *catalogue raisonne*, however, makes the more plausible case for this rather wooden figure having been copied from a contemporary fashion plate.

FLOWER BORDERS IN A GARDEN IN BUCKS

Fig. 7.1 Herbaceous borders, H. H. Thomas, Garden Planning and Planting, 1912.

Fig. 7.2 Spring-bedding and tulip flower 'basket', Thomas, Garden Planning and Planting, 1912.

Fig. 7.3 Formally laid-out choice evergreens and shrubs with spring bulbs before, *Floral World*, 1, 1858.

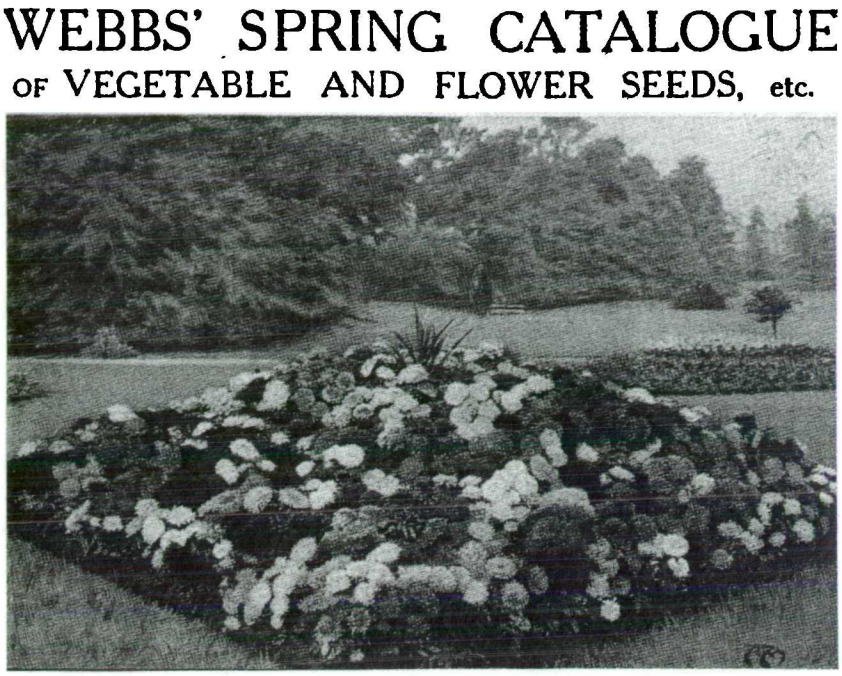
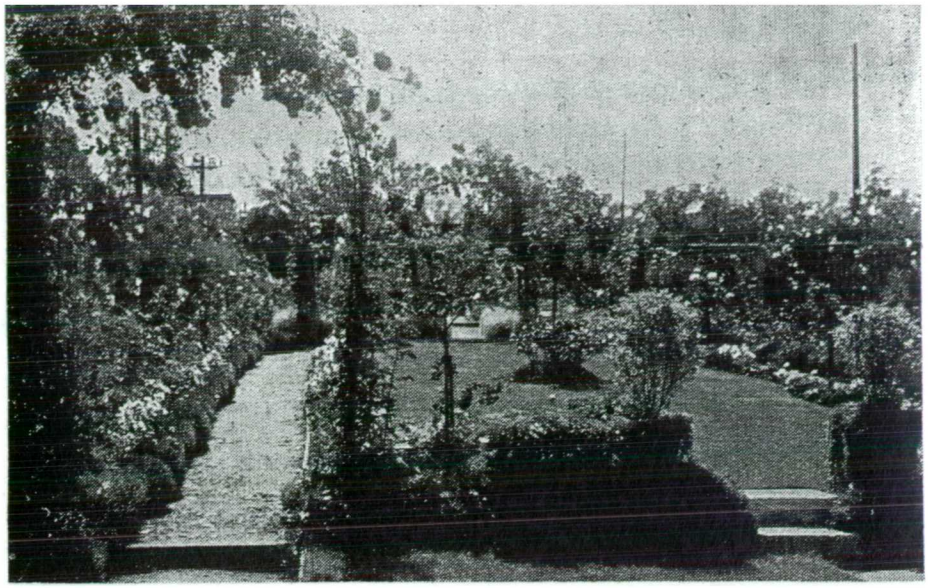
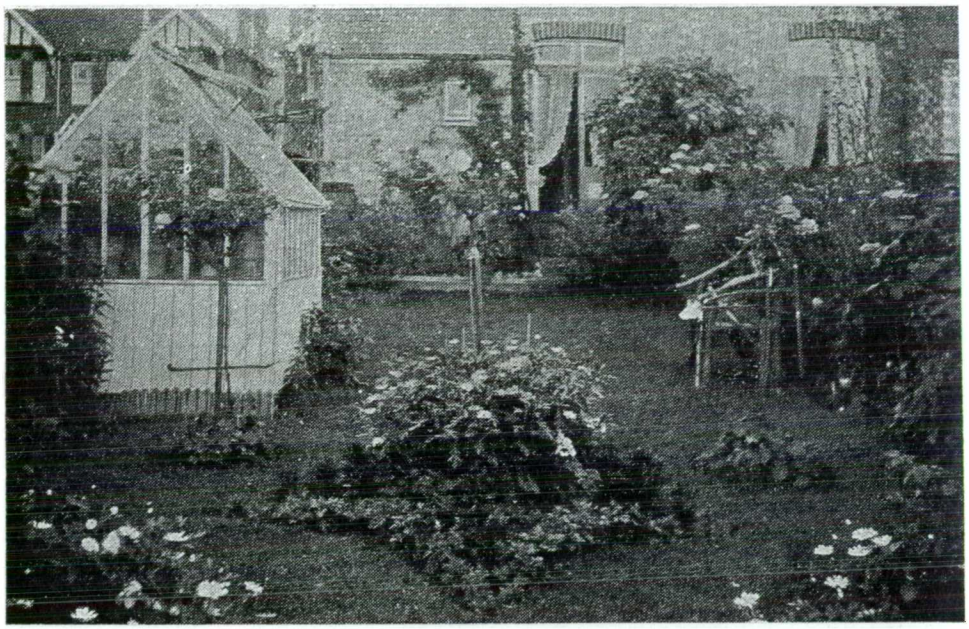


Fig. 7.4 Bedding-out, late-nineteenth century (Gardening Bygones).

Figs. 7.5 & 7.6 Two late nineteenth-century suburban florists' gardens, both specialising in chrysanthemums, (Gardening Bygones)





MAKING THE MOST OF A SUBURBAN GARDEN

Figs. 7.7 Three suburban gardens.
H. H. Thomas, *Garden Planning and Planting*, Cassell & Co. 1912.

Fig. 8.1. London Underground advertisement, 1908

Fig. 8.2. Christening photograph of Mr. Butters (Hackney Archives) 49 King Edward's Road, South Hackney, c.1900

Fig. 8.3. *Punch* cartoon, 1909

Figs.8-4 The Butters family house (c. 1900) and garden (c. 1880), 49, King Edward's Street, South Hackney.

The Butters were a prominent Baptist family of builders whose comfortable lifestyle and fashionable garden was financed by Mr. Butters' development of desirable suburban houses in the streets in the surrounding area between 1870-1910. (Hackney Archives).

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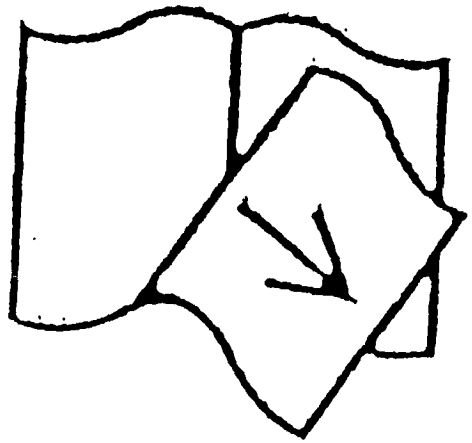
FIGURE 2.



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